

THE ACADEMY.
July 24, 1909.

W. H. Smith & Son—"The Partners



THE ACADEMY

WITH WHICH ARE INCORPORATED LITERATURE AND THE ENGLISH REVIEW

Edited by LORD ALFRED BRUCE DOUGLAS

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JULY 24, 1909

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LIFE AND LETTERS

THE proceedings at Bow Street against Mr. Croasland, Assistant Editor of this paper, have been adjourned till Wednesday next, and we are thus debarred from commenting upon them. On one point, however, we are at liberty to speak with freedom. In the course of his opening remarks Mr. Elliott, K.C., took it upon himself to assert that THE ACADEMY "once had a large circulation," but that he was afraid that "it had fallen upon evil days," thereby suggesting that THE ACADEMY's circulation had dwindled under the present editorship. Mr. Elliott did not attempt to support this serious and damaging statement by evidence, and in point of fact it can be proved by our books and printing accounts that so far from the circulation of THE ACADEMY having deteriorated under Lord Alfred Douglas's editorship, it has been very nearly doubled. Lord Alfred Douglas took over the control of the paper two and a-half years ago, and the circulation has increased steadily ever since. So that Mr. Elliott's fears as to our downfall are groundless and gratuitous. In view of what such a statement might mean commercially we are astonished that a King's Counsel could have been induced to put it forward without a tittle of evidence to prove it, and when the facts are entirely the other way.

Mr. Asquith's speech at the Eighty Club banquet is what the *Daily Mail* would call the speech of a clever politician. Mr. Asquith purported to explain his conception of Liberalism. Before making his definition he was careful to clear a certain amount of ground. "It has always been the case," he observed, "that political life and development in this country will follow its own lines. But it is true that here, as elsewhere, when new ideas of social transformation are in the air, alive and active, Liberalism, unless it is always on the alert, will be exposed to the growing dangers of Conservatism and Socialism. In the case of one class of temperament there are certain to be exaggerated alarms at over-rapid pro-

gress, and at unforeseen changes. In the case of another class of temperament there is certain to be an almost irresistible temptation to the precipitate pursuit of unpractical ideas." Mr. Asquith is becoming a serious rival to Mr. Winston Churchill as a coiner of phrases which are likely to stick to him for some time to come. Mr. Churchill once delivered himself of the phrase "terminological inexactitude." Mr. Churchill and his party abound in terminological inexactitudes. The Premier now comes along with "the precipitate pursuit of unpractical ideas." It is a "clever" phrase, and it expresses to a nicety the whole policy and intention of the present Government. They have been engaged in the precipitate pursuit of unpractical ideas from the moment they came into power. What was their Education Bill but the precipitate pursuit of an unpractical idea? What was their Licensing Bill but the precipitate pursuit of another unpractical idea? And what is their Budget but the precipitate and impertinent pursuit of half a hundred unpractical ideas? The precipitate pursuit of unpractical ideas will hand Mr. Asquith's Government down to posterity as the most ridiculous and dangerous Government that ever existed in England. However, the country's cup of bitterness is fairly full, and the doom of Mr. Asquith and his precipitate and unpractical pursuers is sealed. Decent persons who found themselves in the position of unpopularity and disgrace which the present Government has occupied for at least a couple of years past, would have resigned long ago; but the precipitate pursuit of the appealing and practical pension gives Mr. Asquith and his impecunious supporters pause.

Mr. Asquith further committed himself to the statement that in his view one of the main planks in the policy of Liberalism was "to render property secure by divesting it of injustice." Were more brazen or specious words ever uttered by a responsible Minister? Mr. Asquith and his roost-robber, David Lloyd George, have proved by their acts that they wish to make property secure by destroying it altogether. If you be rich in England you are to be fair game for the roost-robber. If there be nine eggs in your nest Lloyd George wants eight, and he won't wait. He wants to protect your property by taking it away from you, and bestowing it gratuitously upon the proletariat. Lloyd George is an excellent carver, but he has not yet got firm hold of his capon; nor while the sense of justice continues to inhabit the remote recesses of the Harmsworth-sodden English mind is he ever likely to get firm hold. It is more blessed to be poor than to be rich; but it is more blessed to be rich than to appropriate and distribute in benevolence things which do not belong to you.

From a column in the *Sphere*, signed "V. V. V.," which cryptic symbols, we believe, conceal the identity of Mr. E. V. Lucas, we take the following paragraph:

More laughter. "Mr. John Murray, the publisher, said that an editor had no right to condense a novel without consulting the author. Authors were extremely sensitive on the point. (Laughter.)" Why was that funny? Did the court laugh because authors in being sensitive were doing something foolish, displaying their idiocy? That is the usual reason for laughter. But the real reason is, of course, that a court of law is such a cave of human pettiness and squalor that any pretext of relief is clutched at. Let me write the statement in cold ink and you will see how little humour it contains:

Authors having written a story carefully, and according to their own artistic convictions, do not like to have it cut about by a stranger. Not funny at all, is it?

The *Sphere* is edited by Mr. Clement Shorter, and if our recollection serves us Mr. Shorter once appeared as an expert witness against a lady novelist who was seeking damages because some editor or other had been tampering with her work. However, that is not the point. We think Mr. Lucas is quite right in enquiring why the sensitiveness of authors should be considered funny. Really there is nothing funny about the average author. Always he is mightily serious, and nobody who has practical dealings with him will consider him a person who is in the least likely to be blown out of court with laughter.

The whole question of the rights of editors and publishers over manuscripts they may happen to have acquired by purchase and unconditionally is a vexed question. An editor buys a manuscript. The author has written that manuscript most carefully, and according to his own artistic convictions. It may suit the convenience, and it may even be necessary for the editor to cut down the author's copy; that is to say, to omit a paragraph here and a paragraph there and to prune redundant, even if entirely beautiful, phraseology. Is the editor to be held responsible in damages for the mere act of assuming these irksome and painful duties? Of course, the author's grounds for complaint are that the condensed article or story does not represent him in his fullest and more fatal beauty. The fact that an editor often improves what he amends, is not for a moment to be considered; authors never consider such points. We are of opinion, however, that as a matter of natural justice the editor has a perfect right to edit and to use in almost any shape, matter which is purchased, provided that the author has not made stipulations to the contrary. Authors who do not love the pruning knife, and who have a contempt for journalistic exigencies, should mark their manuscript, "To be printed as written if used at all." Then the editor would know what was in front of him. Of course, these remarks are not intended to bear reference to the case from which Mr. Lucas draws his text, as we are not aware whether that case has yet been decided; but generally speaking, we are of opinion that for the author to suffer under the editorship of his editor is an exception. He may suffer in his own feelings, but he seldom suffers in the public eye.

We note that a goodly number of persons have expressed themselves in delighted terms as to certain "innovations" in regard to the publishing of novels. Mr. Hall Caine and Mr. William de Morgan are about to publish novels in two-volume form at two shillings a volume net. The trade is to be treated most liberally, and the public are understood to be getting exceptional value for money, and even the publisher is feeling happy, because the ratio of profit for himself is to be larger than it has even been before. We rejoice suitably. But what of the author? We do not gather that his lot is to be in the least improved. At any rate, nobody has said that it is to be improved. Of course, Mr. Hall Caine, and for that matter, we suppose, Mr. de Morgan, knows how to take care of himself. Mr. Caine at four shillings net will probably be more profitable to Mr. Caine than Mr. Caine at six shillings ordinary, which means, of course, four and sixpence net. Mr. Caine expects to do himself well on the extended sale, and thus to wipe out the sixpence loss which is clearly being made

when a book of his is sold for four shillings instead of four and sixpence. We can well understand that the new system will be most advantageous to Mr. Caine—at least for a time. But Mr. Caine is not the only writer in the world, and Mr. de Morgan is not the only writer in the world. There are men who write quite as good novels as either of them, but who do not circulate anything like so freely. What is to become of these smaller circulations? We shall be told that the new system is intended to increase those circulations. We were told that the six-shilling novel was intended to increase the circulations of the writers of the old three volumes at thirty-one and sixpence. What happened? Those writers went to the wall almost to a man. It is true that their circulations increased; on the other hand, their profits were seriously diminished. There were plenty of respectable and competent novelists in England who made incomes of from three to five hundred a year in the days of the novel at thirty-one and sixpence. Many of them are now dead, and they must have died in straitened circumstances. Their novels at six shillings had larger circulations, it is true; but their incomes were reduced by quite half, and in many cases by more than half.

There are publishers in London at the present moment who make it a boast that they never pay more than thirty pounds for a novel. For this sum they obtain stories by writers with reputable names, and they publish on such lines that they are bound to make a profit. Now, publishers are not philanthropists. It is certain that the new system will not be generally adopted unless it shows clear and unmistakable benefits for the publisher. We do not for a moment see how the author can be sweated down further than he has already been sweated down—at any rate, when it comes to selling a whole novel for thirty pounds. Where the publisher's chance against the author will come in must be on the question of royalties. The effect, and the almost immediate effect, of the new system will be a shrinkage in the rate of royalties. That odd sixpence—i.e., the difference between four shillings net and four and sixpence net or six shillings ordinary—must be made good out of somebody, and we shall be agreeably surprised if that somebody does not turn out to be the author. We do not wish to suggest that the particular publisher who is initiating the two-volumes-at-four-shillings-net system is in any way to be condemned for the course he has taken. In point of fact, he happens to be one of the very small band of publishers who have a reputation for liberal dealings with authors, and we have never heard the smallest complaint about him. At the same time, he is not by any means the head and front of the trade in novels, inasmuch as there are several other houses who do quite as large a business as himself in that direction. If the new system proves successful, these other houses will most certainly not hesitate to adopt it, and, in our opinion, and for the reasons we have given above, the result is not likely to be beneficial to the man with the pen.

Mr. Frank Harris is, of course, a great judge of etiquette, and it is therefore interesting to read his comments in *Vanity Fair* on the incident which occurred last week in connection with Lord Winterton and Mr. Thorne, the Labour member, in the House of Commons. This is what Mr. Harris has to say: "Of course, allowance must be made for Lord Winterton; he is very young, and in his position a charge of being drunk would scarcely be deemed

an insult—a shrug of the shoulders and it would be forgotten. But the character of the Labour members of Parliament is a good deal higher. Mr. Thorne's constituents would regard drunkenness on his part as a most serious and shameful offence." It is characteristic of persons belonging to the class of Mr. Frank Harris that they are always ready to take upon themselves the task of giving advice on questions of manners, good taste, and etiquette to their social superiors. The standard of good manners, which prompts a person of the middle classes to say to a peer, "You may be a Lord, but you are obviously not a gentleman," is very common indeed, and Mr. Harris no doubt thinks that his remarks are in the highest degree creditable to his own independence of character. As a matter of fact, they are the merest claptrap. It is only a few weeks since one of the Labour members was arrested and charged at one of the police courts with being drunk and incapable. The gentleman in question was found by a policeman lying on his back in a hopeless state of intoxication under the belly of a considerate cab-horse. We have not heard so far that the other Labour members have exhibited any indignation against their comrade in distress. On the contrary, and we say it to their credit, they appear to have been most anxious to condone the convivial offences of a member of their own party. We do not blame them for this; quite the contrary, but their action in the matter does not fit in very gracefully with Mr. Frank Harris's views as to the way in which drunkenness is regarded by the classes and the masses respectively.

The current issue of a magazine published for the Viking Club, and entitled "Old Lore Miscellany," contains some interesting alliterative rhymes invented with a view to catching the tongue tripping "when uttered quickly." We reproduce two of them:—

The swan swam ower the loch—
Weel swam swan;
The swan swam back again—
Better swam swan.

The red cock sat on the red kail stock;

While the red cock cocked, the red stock rocked.

"She sells sea-shells on the sea-shore" is clearly nothing to this. The curious part about these alliterative rhymes is that they have all some soul of poetry in them. If "the swan swam ower the loch," etc., had appeared, say, in a poem by Burns it would have been proclaimed fine poetry by the enthusiastic, and occult meanings would have been read into it by persons who are fond of reading occult meanings into poetry. Even such a line as "Peter Piper picked a peck of pepper off a pewter plate" is not to be despised as a thing of beauty in its way, and all that is required to make it appear important is a great name and a blind faith. In the same magazine we find other rhymes which might be taken for poetry. For example:—

A head like a mill-pick,
An' feet like a sheul (shovel),
A body like a pipe bag,
An' yet no a feul (fool).

Again:—

Twa grey golts lying in a sty,
The mair they get the mair they cry.

These really are not lines from a poem, but simply riddles, the first four lines meaning a goose and the second a pair of millstones.

LA MORT DES PAUVRES

[From Charles Baudelaire.]

Death is our sustenance, and makes us seize

Hold on our life: it is the end, the high

Hope that is like a cordial we buy,

And till the evening strengthens our weak knees;

Beyond the snows, the frosts, the storms that freeze,

The tremor of a light beneath a sky

Of visible darkness, and the hostelry

Where we may eat and sleep and take our ease.

It is an angel, in whose quickening palms

Are folded joyous dreams and slumberous calms,

Who makes the bed of naked men and poor;

It is of God the mystic granary,

The long home of the homeless, and his store;

The door that opens on the unfathomed sky.

M. JOURDAIN.

W. H. SMITH AND SON

"THE PARTNERS."

BEFORE we proceed to deal with an exceedingly entertaining section of our subject we should like to call attention to the following facts. Last week we addressed an open letter to the Viscountess Hambleden, and that letter has already had a most excellent effect. According to the *Court Circular* of Monday, his Majesty the King went round to Lady Hambleden's house in Belgrave Square on Sunday afternoon and took tea with her ladyship. The *Court Circular*, or, at any rate, the *Daily Mail*, which copied the *Court Circular's* report of his Majesty's visit was most careful to describe Lady Hambleden as "widow of the late Rt. Hon. W. H. Smith, M.P." This is very good, and we make no complaints; for it is seemly that "Old Morality" should thus be remembered. We learn, further, from another hapenny newspaper that Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son have this week contributed £2,000 to the funds of a certain hospital, and that Awdry and Hornby have each contributed one hundred guineas to the funds of the same hospital. We do not wish to suggest that these contributions are to be counted among the results of our letter to the Viscountess Hambleden. Our purpose is merely to note and record them in the way of news; but we have other and further news. On sending a representative to Messrs. W. H. Smith's Strand establishment on Thursday morning for our usual copy of the *Freethinker*, we were informed that Messrs. Smith could not supply the *Freethinker*. The man at the counter would not say flatly that the firm had ceased to deal with the paper; but we conclude that this is the case, and we think that we have a right to suppose that Messrs. W. H. Smith's sudden cessation of part and lot in the dissemination of Mr. Foote's atheistic journal is the direct outcome of our letter to the Viscountess Hambleden; so that THE ACADEMY does occasionally accomplish a certain amount of good.

Now, as to the partners. Everybody who has had dealings with W. H. Smith is aware that "the partners" figure very largely in all conversations about business, whether at the Strand house or in Fetter Lane. When you call at Smith's on affairs of importance, you "must see one of the partners." For ourselves, we have seen one of the partners many a time and oft. By way of giving them something over which they may ponder, we reproduce below a small correspondence which has taken place between a Mr. John McCann, a news vendor, Mr. W.

Wilkie Jones, secretary of the News vendor's General and Provident Institution, and Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son:

The News vendors' Benevolent and Provident Institution,
15 and 16, Farringdon Street, E.C.
12th January, 1909.

To Mr. John McCann,

Jubilee Cottage, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex.

DEAR SIR,—With reference to your several recent visits to this office, and the desire then expressed that I would appeal to Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son on behalf of yourself and other itinerant vendors of news displaced by the Metropolitan Railway Company, I now enclose herewith a copy of my letter to the firm and their reply.—Yours faithfully,

W. WILKIE JONES, Secretary.

The News vendors' Benevolent and Provident Institution,
16, Farringdon Street, E.C.
7th January, 1909.

Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son,
186, Strand.

GENTLEMEN,—John McCann, of Harrow, and late of Baker Street Station, with others who have suffered loss of their "pitches" under recent Metropolitan Railway arrangements, deem themselves oppressed by Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son, and these men have asked me to seek for them an opportunity of laying their case before you.

I have no right or desire to interfere in this or any such matter, but I am distressed that you, to whom I am greatly indebted for constant kindness and consideration, can be regarded in such a light. I am sure the matter is wholly one of strenuous trade competition, and that if incidentally any seeming oppression has occurred no one will regret it more than your good selves, and that in granting these "rough diamonds" an interview you may be able to considerably modify their erroneous impression, and, possibly, suggest some other location where they may pursue their vocation.

Apologising for this intrusion, I am, gentlemen, faithfully your servant,

W. WILKIE JONES, Secretary.

186, Strand, W.C.
8th January, 1909.

The Secretary,
The News vendors' Benevolent and Provident Institution,
16, Farringdon Street.

DEAR SIR,—We are in receipt of your letter of yesterday with reference to Mr. John McCann and other sellers of newspapers outside Metropolitan stations. We do not think that any object would be served by our seeing a deputation from these men. When we first saw the Metropolitan Company with regard to taking over the bookstalls, they informed us that they were determined to give these outside sellers notice to quit, and we cannot see that any injustice has been done to them, either by ourselves or the company, as they were merely tenants for short periods to whom notice could be given at any time. If there is anyone who has cause to complain it is ourselves, who pay high rents to railway companies for bookstall privileges, and have to suffer the competition of an increasing number of outside sellers, who pay no rent whatever, and in many cases intercept the cream of the business before we have a chance.—Yours faithfully,

W. H. SMITH AND SON.

It should be mentioned that Mr. John McCann was accustomed to sell newspapers at Baker Street Station for a period of over thirty years. He sold newspapers there for quite a quarter of a century before Messrs. W. H.

Smith and Son took over "the bookstall privileges" at Baker Street; and it will be noted that Messrs. Smith are of opinion that no injustice was done to Mr. John McCann, and that if anybody has suffered at all, it is not Mr. John McCann and other newsvendors, young or old, but Messrs. Smith themselves. According to Messrs. W. H. Smith Mr. John McCann and other sellers of newspapers outside Metropolitan stations actually "intercept the cream" of the newspaper business before Messrs. Smith "have a chance." Therefore, one supposes that all that Messrs. Smith get is the skim milk, and the skim milk seems to be a very profitable affair, at any rate, when you come to consider that Messrs. Smith can afford to give £2,000 to a hospital in one lump, and in the shape of a "second contribution." We are quite prepared to accept Mr. Wilkie Jones's statement that "the matter is wholly one of strenuous trade competition," and that "if incidentally any seeming oppression has occurred, no one will regret it more than Messrs. Smith's good selves." What we should like Awdry, Hornby, and Awdry, junior, with the possible assistance of Smart, to do is to consider fully, carefully, and without bias, the case of the aforesaid John McCann, and inform us whether in their opinion they have done everything that a rich, powerful, and benevolent firm may reasonably be expected to do when they start business in opposition to a poor and elderly man, and practically rent his pitch over his head. We make no doubt whatever that the law is entirely on Messrs. Smith's side; we make no doubt that they pay heavy rents "for bookstall privileges"; and we make no doubt that they would be richer if there were no outside competition. We will even go so far as to assume that, by reason of their resources and organisation, Messrs. Smith are in a position to serve the public much more efficiently and much more ably than the outside man. We will even suppose that the old adage about "live and let live" is not to be considered in these days of "strenuous competition." But granting all this, we wish to ask Awdry, Hornby, Awdry, junior, and Smart whether, in their opinion, it was altogether handsome of the great and benevolent house of Smith to take over the bookstall privileges at the Metropolitan Railway stations, without endeavouring to make some reasonable and kindly arrangement with the small and unmonied men who suffered in consequence of Messrs. Smith's arrival on the scene. We think that such an arrangement could, and should, have been made, and, what is more, we think that it is not too late even yet for such an arrangement to be made. We have received a number of letters bearing on this and similar questions from other sources, but "the partners" will no doubt like to deliberate on the correspondence we have published.

LITERARY INACCURACIES

II.

ONE of the commonest transgressions of scientific fact in poetry is the error of making the female bird sing, as Milton's

wakeful nightingale,
She all night long her amorous descant sung.

Scott is more correct:—

The lark his lay who trilled all day
Sits hushed his partner nigh.

So is Burns, whose merle "in *his* noontide bower makes woodland echoes ring," and "*his* lay the linnet pours," but usually in poetry small singing birds are feminine. Even Shakespeare is not free from this poetical misrepresentation, for Juliet, speaking of a nightingale, says,

Nightly *she* sings on yond pomegranate tree.

The same mistake is made by Portia in the "Merchant of Venice" (v. i. 104):—

The nightingale if *she* should sing by day,
When every goose is cackling, would be thought
No better a musician than the wren.

Although Pope, by the advice of a friend, tried to make correctness the special characteristic of his poetry, he is far from being free from faults of malobservation. In translating the "Iliad," xv., 271, he transforms Homer's "horned stag" into a "branching hind," regardless of the fact that hinds have no horns. In another passage he applies the picturesque but obviously false epithet "azure" to the bronze arms of the Homeric heroes, whom he describes seemingly as butting like rams in the line:—

Now shield with shield, with helmet helmet closed.

A still more absurd mistranslation is his description of the bow bent by Pandarus:—

Now with full force the yielding bow he bends,
Drawn to an arch and joins the doubling ends.

Wordsworth finds ignorance of the common phenomena of nature displayed in "the style in which Dryden has executed a description of night in one of his tragedies, and Pope his translation of the famous moonlight scene in the 'Iliad.'" "A blind man," he remarks, "in the habit of attending accurately to descriptions casually dropped from the lips of those around him, might easily depict those appearances with more truth. Dryden's lines are vague, bombastic, and senseless; those of Pope, though he had Homer to guide him, are throughout false and contradictory. The verses of Dryden, once highly celebrated, are forgotten; those of Pope still retain their hold upon public estimation—nay, there is not a passage of descriptive poetry which at this day finds so many and such ardent admirers. Strange to think of an enthusiast, as may have been the case with thousands, reciting those verses under the cope of a moonlight sky, without having his raptures in the least disturbed by a suspicion of their absurdity." Pope's translation of the moonlight scene is not so well known as it was a hundred years ago, having been perhaps superseded by Tennyson's more recent rendering of the passage in blank verse. The once famous lines, which cannot now be assumed to be familiar to every schoolboy, are as follows:—

As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
O'er heav'n's clear azure spreads her sacred light,
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene;
Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole,
O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
And tip with silver every mountain's head;
Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
The conscious swains rejoicing in the sight
Eye the blue vault and bless the useful light.
So many flames before proud Ilium blaze,
And lighten glimmering Xanthus with their rays;
The long reflections of the distant fires
Gleam on the walls and tremble on the spires.
A thousand piles the dusky horrors gild,
And shoot a shady lustre o'er the field.
Full fifty guards each flaming pile attend,
Whose umber'd arms by fits thick flashes send,
Loud neigh the coursers o'er their heaps of corn,
And ardent warriors wait the rising morn.

Wordsworth unfortunately does not specify the particular points which he considered to be absurd in this translation. The lines that appear to be most untrue to nature are those in which the stars are described as shedding a yellower verdure over the dark trees and tipping the mountains' heads with silver. In the first place, the light of the stars has no appreciable effect in bright moonlight. In the second place, even if the moon were absent, they would not be bright enough to make the leaves of the trees appear yellowish green, and still less do they shed a silver light on mountains or any other dark object. Lastly, if they did shed a silver light, it would not be confined to the tips of the mountains. Perhaps Wordsworth may have further objected to the term "azure" as inapplicable to the heaven, which is rather dark grey than blue on moonlight nights. Also, the planets, neither in appearance nor in reality, roll round the moon, and, when the moon is shining bright, the planets are less vivid than usual and the number of stars visible is much less than on moonless nights. The verb

"gild" may be regarded as inappropriate, since it suggests the production of a continuous yellow surface, and not separate points of light. On the other hand, in spite of all these faults in detail, it must be admitted that the easy flowing melody of the lines somehow brings before our imagination a more vivid idea of a moonlight night than could be produced by a more correct description expressed in less harmonious numbers. Also, some of the lines are as graphic and true to nature as they are melodious.

Lowell criticises Pope's lines,

In man the judgment shoots at flying game,
A bird of passage gone as soon as found,
Now in the moon, perhaps now under ground.

He thinks "a bird of passage, now in the moon, now under ground, could be found nowhere—out of Goldsmith's *Natural History*, perhaps." Of Goldsmith's capacity to write on zoology Dr. Johnson said, "Goldsmith will give us a very fine book on the subject; but if he can distinguish a cow from a horse, that, I believe, may be the extent of his knowledge of natural history." His mistakes of fact are, however, by no means confined to this charmingly popular treatment of science. In the fifteenth chapter of the "Vicar of Wakefield" he represents the wise Mr. Burchell as saying that Providence seems "to debilitate the understanding where the heart is corrupt and diminish the power where there is the will to do mischief. This rule seems to extend even to other animals: the little vermin race are ever treacherous, cruel, and cowardly, whilst those endowed with strength and power are generous, brave, and gentle." It is easy to find contradictory instances from political and natural history to this generalisation. Homer knew better when he illustrated the courage of one of his heroes by comparing him to a fly, which Pope characteristically but unnecessarily magnifies in his translation to a "hornet." It would be difficult to find instances of generosity and gentleness on the part of lions and tigers, unless we credit the old story of Androcles; nor is there any good reason for imputing want of courage to rats, ants, and other small insects.

A modern magazine described eyes as "glaring like obelisks." Herrick, in a charming lyric to Julia, sings,

Her eyes the glow-worm lend thee!

which would not be a very useful loan, if the glow-worm is as blind as beetles are popularly supposed to be. Evidently the poet supposed that the phosphorescent light emitted from the glow-worm's body is the brightness of its eyes. As Thackeray was a confirmed man about town, very accurate information about country matters cannot be expected from him. He evidently did not agree with Shakespeare in thinking that the dewdrops fall from heaven, for he and his companions coaching into London saw it "rising up from the market gardens of Knightsbridge." In the first chapter of "Esmond" he reverses the relation of streams and their tributaries. "What!" he asks, "does a stream rush out of a mountain, free and pure, to roll through fair pastures, to feed and throw out bright tributaries, and to end in a village gutter?" The same misconception of the relation between main streams and tributaries seems implied in Dryden's couplet:—

Divided interests, while thou think'st to sway,
Draw, like two brooks, thy middle stream away.

In the storm described in the fourth book of "Paradise Regained" the winds "rushed abroad from the four hinges of the world." This impossibility is excused on the ground that it is a purely poetical storm. Nevertheless, Seneca rebukes Virgil for taking the same liberty with the laws of Nature in the storm of the first "Æneid," a passage which no doubt Milton was imitating in "Paradise Regained," and which was itself copied from the fifth book of the "Odyssey." Of a like character is the heterogeneous collection of trees in Spenser's Wood of Error, and the lion and palm tree that Shakespeare introduces into the Forest

of Arden, and perhaps the spirit's address to the Severn in "Comus"—

May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crown'd
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon,

although it must be remembered that this is not a description but a pious wish.

Scott has often been criticised for making the sun set over the waves on the east coast of Scotland in the "Antiquary." I once saw this phenomenon myself on the east coast of England on my first arrival at Hunstanton on a dark afternoon. It was certainly very surprising until next day, when the clearer weather revealed the position of Hunstanton on the shores of the Wash, the opposite coast of which is often invisible if there is a mist. Mr. Keene, in his notes on "Childe Harold," accuses Byron of a similar mistake when he makes his attendant sing:—

Yon sun that sets upon the sea
We follow in his flight.

Upon this the commentator remarks that "the Childe was sailing south-eastward." But how could he be sailing south-eastward on his way to Portugal from the white cliffs of Dover? More to the point is the instance quoted in the note from Macaulay's Essay on Warren Hastings, where we are told that the people of Madras saw "the eastern sky reddened by a vast semicircle of burning villages," although Madras is on the east coast of India. Byron, however, does go wrong in the second canto, in which the sun is seen from the neighbourhood of Tepalen to sink behind Tomerit, a mountain to the north-east of that town. Mark Twain, leaving an Italian port at sunset, describes the full moon as shining overhead. In Wolfe's poem Sir John Moore is buried by "the struggling moonbeam's misty light" on a night which, according to the calendar, was moonless. Indeed, the evidence of poetry seems to show that, since men have had watches and candles to tell the time of day by, they have become very careless in observing the motions and positions of the heavenly bodies. Campbell, in a poem addressed to Caroline, beseeches the evening star to "rise early." His editor and cousin, Dr. Lewis Campbell, remarks that the same mistake is committed by the realist Tolstoy, who, without the excuse of metre, makes his hero delay a confidential communication "until the evening star shall have risen on the horizon." Another parallel will be found in the "Testament of Cresseid." Henryson, the Dunfermline schoolmaster, at the beginning of that poem, relates how on a cold day in Lent, sitting by the fire with Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde" in his hand and a beaker of spirits in reach, he saw the sun setting,

And fair Venus, the beauty of the night,
Uprais, and set into the west full richt
Her golden face, in opposition
Of god Phebus direct descending down.

Keats is accused of mal-observation in the following gorgeous piece of colour painting in the "Eve of St. Agnes":—

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for Heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory like a saint,

to which it is objected that moonlight is never strong enough to project colour on anything from a stained-glass window. The same objection may be made to Scott's account of Deloraine's visit to Melrose Abbey, where we read that

The moonbeam kiss'd the holy pane,
And threw on the pavement a bloody stain.

In both cases the beauty of the description more than atones for the error of fact. The same excuse may be made for the spreading of the floor with carpets instead of rushes in the "Eve of St. Agnes," the correction of which would deprive us of such a fine line as

And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

Scott transgresses fact in his historical novels in the same lordly manner as Shakespeare does in his historical dramas. He often frankly takes his readers into his confidence and informs them of the liberties he chooses to take with history. Thus in one of the author's notes on "Marmion" we are informed that Sir David Lindsay is introduced in the character of Lion-Herald sixteen years before he obtained that office. There are also many deviations from history in Scott's novels and poems of which he gives us no warning. In "Marmion," 3, xxii., Alexander III. of Scotland has an

honoured brand
The gift of Cœur-de-Lion's hand,

although he was born forty-two years after the date of Cœur-de-Lion's death. Later in the poem Archibald Bell-the-Cat says:—

Thanks to Saint Bothan, son of mine,
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line;
So swore I, and I swear it still,
Let my boy-bishop fret his fill.

Yet in the year of the battle of Flodden Gawain Douglas, the translator of the *Æneid*, was neither boy nor bishop, and in Sir Herbert Maxwell's "History of the House of Douglas" will be found a facsimile of the signature of Gawain's eldest brother, George, Master of Angus. In "Ivanhoe" Scott is still more regardless of historic accuracy than in "Marmion." Professor Freeman remarks that in the authentic records of the past "we may look in vain for any sign of that long-abiding hatred between Normans and Saxons of which Thierry has, after his master Scott, given us so eloquent a picture." This novel has also surprising errors in details. In the seventh chapter William Rufus is called the grandfather of King John; in the thirty-fourth chapter Robert Courthose is called his uncle, and in the following paragraph it seems to be implied that Henry I. was his father. The Empress Matilda is confused with her mother Matilda, the Scottish Princess. When Richard returned to England—not, by the bye, incognito, as narrated in Scott—in 1194, Cedric was a middle-aged man, and yet his father entertained Harold on his way to Stamford Bridge in 1066. Cedric calls Athelstane the male descendant of the Holy Confessor, though that monarch died childless. In a famous sonnet of Keats, as Palgrave points out, stout Cortes is introduced, though "history requires Balboa." Such mistakes would be severely condemned by Macaulay's school-boy. But even Macaulay himself is not infallible. Referring to the difficulty of reading through the "Fairy Queen" to the end, he declares that "very few and very weary are those who are in at the death of the blatant beast." Thus he shows that he himself never read to the end of the existing fragment of Spenser's great poem, for, as a matter of fact or fiction, the blatant beast is not killed therein, but is described in the concluding stanzas of the sixth book as breaking his iron chain and ranging through the world more fiercely than before.

Defoe gives his readers a general impression of photographic fidelity to fact in the minutest details. Nevertheless in "Robinson Crusoe" his hero pulled off his clothes to swim to the wreck, and when he succeeded in getting on board went to the bread-room and filled his pockets with biscuit. In the pages of Dickens Mr. Squeers may be found hoeing turnips in winter, from which it may be inferred that Dickens, like Thackeray, was not very familiar with rural life.

Mistakes in the use of words have often become so prevalent that they have been adopted by good writers and ceased to be regarded as mistakes. Thus "darkling,"

properly, or at least originally, an adverb, with the adverbial suffix "ling," and meaning "in the dark," was naturally mistaken for a present participle. From this supposed present participle comes the verb "darkle," meaning "grow dark." The first instance of its use, quoted in Murray's Dictionary, is in Moore's "Ode to Anacreon," 1800:—

Now with angry scorn you darkle,
Now with tender anguish sparkle.

In the same way the verb "grovel," as early as the Elizabethan age, was formed from the adverb "groveling." "Banting" was the name of a gentleman who invented a popular method of reducing corpulence. His system was called the Banting system. "Banting" was not unnaturally supposed to be a participle or verbal noun, and hence arose the verb "bant." Hamlet says that "the toe of the peasant comes so near the heels of our courtier he galls his kibe." Here "kibe" means "chilblain," but Byron thought it meant "heel," for in "Childe Harold," I., lxvii., he describes "devices quaint and frolics ever new" as "treading on each other's kibes." We can scarcely think he intended to give these personifications chilblains. In an earlier canto he refers to "Our Lady's House of Woe," so translating "Nossa Senora de Pena," which really means "Our Lady of the Rock." Chaucer says that Troilus is second to none

In dorryng don that longeth to a knight,
that is, in daring do that which behoves a knight. Spenser took "dorryng don" as a compound noun, and introduced it into his "Shepherd's Calendar" in the form "derring doe":—

For ever who in derring doe were dread,
The lofty verse of hem was loved aye.

In the glossary attached to the Calendar "derring doe" is explained as meaning "manhood and chivalrie." Scott follows Spenser in his misuse of the term. When the wounded knight of Ivanhoe heard Rebecca's account of the Black Knight's prowess in breaking the gate of Front de Bouef's castle, he muttered to himself in astonishment, "Singular if there be two who can do a deed of such derring-do," and the footnote explains "derring-do" as meaning "desperate courage." This is by no means the only mistake that Spenser makes in the use of archaisms derived from Chaucer's "well of English undefiled." Chaucer employs either "yede" or "yode" as the past tense of "go." Spenser uses "yode" quite correctly as a past tense, but "yede," as Professor Skeat has pointed out, appears thrice as a present tense in his poems, as, for instance, in "F. Q.," I., xi., 5:—

Then badd the knight his lady yede aloof.

Spenser was not, however, the original sinner in this misuse of the form, for we find in the Induction to the "Mirror for Magistrates":—

Here entered we, and yeeding forth anon
An horrible loathly lake we might discern.

The greatest fabricator of false archaisms was, however, Chatterton. Chaucer wrote in his prologue to the "Canterbury Tales":—

But gret harm was it, as it thoughte me
That on his schyne a mormal hadde he,
For blankmanger he made with the beste.

That is to say, Chaucer was distressed that a cook who could make excellent blanc-mange should be afflicted with a cancerous sore on his shin. Chatterton, however, as Scott pointed out, thought that blankmanger, as well as mormal, was an ailment, that it was a kind of mange, and inserted a prescription for its cure in his "Rolls of St. Bartholomew's Priory." His numerous other mistakes and their origin are explained by Professor Skeat in his edition of Chatterton's poems. He found, for instance, the word "gare" explained in Kersey's Dictionary as meaning "cause." Unfortunately, he mistook it for a noun, and so uses it in his poetry:—

If in this battle luck deserts our gare.

In a prose passage he relates how "the loude blautante

Wynde hurled the Battayle agaynste an Heck." Here "heck" means "rock." But how does he get this meaning? Because he found it in Kersey's Dictionary, where the real equivalent of the word happened to be misprinted "rock." "Heck" really means a "rack" for hay.

Amusing mistakes are often made in books that describe foreign countries. They are due generally to the traveller's ignorance of the manners and customs of the people inhabiting the countries he describes. In some cases the traveller may be deliberately imposed upon by his informants. Both causes are supposed to have given a somewhat fabulous character to parts of the History of Herodotus. When attending lectures at Oxford I found the following anonymous epigram, which expresses the popular view of the Father of History, written on the desk before me:—

Herodotus, Herodotus,
You could not spell, you ancient cuss;
The priests in Egypt gammoned you,
It was not very hard to do;
But don't you think you'll gammon us,
Herodotus, Herodotus,

The second line is presumably a reference to the spelling of Ionic Greek. What follows alludes to the story of the Nile issuing from between the mountains Crophi and Mophi, which certainly sounds like a nursery tale. In justice, however, to the historian we must remember that recent investigations have discovered that many of his narratives, once regarded as mythical, have been found to have some foundation in fact. This is more than can be said of most mediæval travellers' tales. Some, however, admit of explanation, as, for instance, Othello's account of "men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders." Raleigh is convinced that this wonder "is true, because every child in the provinces of Arroimaia and Canuri affirms the same." The origin of the belief in such prodigies has been found in the account given by Olearius of the Samojeds of Northern Muscovy, whose "garments are made like those that are called cosagues, open only at the necks. When the cold is extraordinary, they put their cosagues over their heads and let the sleeves hang down, their faces being not to be seen, but at the cleft which is at the neck. Whence some have taken occasion to write that in these northern countries there are people without heads, having their faces in their breasts." A traveller to India reported that the inhabitants were so afflicted by consumption that they were continually spitting blood. The explanation of this is that Indians are fond of chewing betel-nut, which makes their saliva red. In a famous encyclopædia, under the head "Brewing," it is gravely asserted that beer "is shipped in frozen blocks to Australia and India," so that "in Calcutta, on the hottest day, the residents now suck (not sip) their frozen pale ale." This appears sufficiently incredible. I have lived a quarter of a century in India and never seen or heard of frozen beer there, although Anglo-Indians are in the habit of spoiling the liquor by putting lumps of ice in it. I have, however, heard of what is called *champagne frappé* being prepared in India. Rich natives of the country do sometimes freeze champagne to a solid state and imbibe it in the form of ice. But, of course, it is not so imported into India. Perhaps bottles of beer may have been sometimes treated in this way at the time when the fourth volume of the ninth edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" was written. M. M.

GRAY AND MILTON

ATTENTION has recently been called in these columns to Wordsworth's use of Milton's words, and it was abundantly shown how saturated Wordsworth was with the poetic language of the author of "Paradise Lost." Equally great is the debt which Gray owed to Milton, and, considering the position of Gray midway between Milton and Wordsworth, and the undoubted inspiration which his "Hymn to Adversity" gave to Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty"—in the matter of metre, thought and

language—it may not be unprofitable to examine carefully the few poems which Gray wrote, and track his borrowings from Milton to their source. There are more of them than may be supposed.

Gray's admiration for Milton is obvious. He mentions him, or refers to him, four times; in the elegy, in the ode performed in the Cambridge senate-house in 1769, in the "Progress of Poesy," and in his fragmentary "Stanzas to Mr. Bentley." By his training he was, of all men, fit to enjoy what Mark Pattison called, "the last reward of consummated scholarship"—a thorough appreciation of Milton.

Taking Gray's "Ode on the Spring" first, we find it full of Miltonic reminiscences, especially in the first stanza. "Rosy-bosomed Hours" occurs in *Comus*, 986. In "Fair Venus' train" we have a reminder of "Diana's train," P.L. 9, 486. The "Attic warbler" is adapted from "the Attic bird trills her thick-warbled notes," P.R. 245. For "responsive to the cuckoo's note" compare "sole, or responsive to each other's note," P.L. 4, 645; while the concluding lines of the first stanza contain the idea of P.L. 8, 515-516. For the rest, "a broader, browner shade" is thoroughly Miltonic, and was used by Wordsworth as well. "The busy murmur" recalls the "bee's industrious murmur," P.R. 4, 248; and the "glittering female," with her "hoarded sweets," in the last stanza recalls "the female bee that feeds her husband drone deliciously," P.L. 7, 450.

In the "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat" there is, perhaps, nothing traceable to Milton; but in the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," we have "the spirits pure, the slumbers light," recalling "his sleep was airy light, of pure digestion bred," P.L. 5, 4, while "the approach of morn" occurs in P.L. 9, 191. Later "faded care" is perhaps suggested by "on his faded cheek deliberation sat and public care" P.L. 1, 601.

The "Hymn to Adversity" has several Miltonic phrases. The "iron scourge and torturing hour" come from P.L. 2, 90:—"When the scourge inexorably and the torturing hour call us to penance"; "adamantine chain" from P.L. 1, 48; "pangs unfelt before" from P.L. 2, 703. In stanza 3 "Folly's brood" is due to *Il Penseroso*, as also are "the sable garb" of wisdom, and the "leadens" eye of Melancholy. For "Gorgon terrors" compare "Gorgonian terror" of P.L. 2, 611.

In the "Progress of Poesy" "solemn-breathing airs" recalls the use of this epithet in *Comus* 557. The "purple light of love" is familiar to Milton, as is "the heavenly muse"; and the origin of "justify the laws of Jove" is obvious. For "lucid" applied by Gray to the Avon, compare Milton's "Abbana and Parphar, lucid streams," P.L. 1, 469. In "The Bard" we have "streamed like a meteor to the troubled air," which cannot but owe much to Milton's "Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind," P.L. 537. "Glittering skirts" remind us of "dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear," P.L. 3, 380, and "Baron bold" is due to *L'Allegro*, 119.

The third stanza of the "Ode for Music," representing words uttered by Milton, can, as might be expected, be traced almost entirely from Milton; while the seventh stanza contains three notable expressions from Milton: "not obvious, not obtrusive," P.L. ix., 505; "modest pride," P.L. 4, 310; and "laureate wreath," *Sonnet to Cromwell*.

The "Elegy" appears to owe hardly anything to Milton, if we except the epithet "incense-breathing," and the cock's clarion," P.L. 7, 443. Of the other pieces by Gray there is the well-known "iron sleet of arrowy shower," admitted by the author to be taken from "sharp sleet of arrowy shower," P.R. 3, 324. "Amorous descant" in the sonnet on the death of Richard West, is from P.L. 4, 603. In the "Ode on the Pleasure arising from Vicissitude," "vermeil cheek" may be compared with the "vermeil-tintured cheek" in *Comus*; and "liquid light" occurs in P.L. 8, 362. The fragmentary "Agrippina" contains "flowery lap," which occurs in P.L. 4, 254, and in the *Vacation Exercise*; while the last line but two of

the fragment "with fond reluctance yielding modesty," is based on the "yielded with coy submission, modest pride, and sweet reluctant amorous delay," of P.L. 4, 310. Finally, the first words of the "Hymn to Ignorance" are intentionally taken from P.L. 1, 250, "Hail, Horrors, Hail."

The foregoing are the most obvious reminiscences of, and borrowings from, Milton in Gray. Many of his isolated words and epithets have their parallel in the older poet also, such as "buxom," "vernal," "grisly," "solemn," "jocund," "sequestered"; but they need not be enumerated. A noticeable peculiarity of Gray, namely, his almost excessive fondness for abstract personifications—Anger, Fear, Envy, Sorrow, Poverty, Prosperity, Despair, Disease, etc.—cannot be said to be amplifications of the few specimens to be found in Milton.

A word may be added concerning Wordsworth's debt to Gray. This is clearly seen in the "Ode to Duty," as indicated above; and Wordsworth's "meanest flower that blows" may be attributed to Gray's "meanest flowret of the vale," "Ode on the Pleasure," etc.

REVIEWS

A LITERARY EVENT

The Bride of the Mistletoe. By JAMES LANE ALLEN. (Macmillan, 2s. 6d.)

THE announcement, a short time ago, of a new novel by the author of "The Choir Invisible," ready for publication, sent a little thrill of pleasant expectancy through the thoughts of all who were familiar with his previous works. For the aims of Mr. Allen are not as those of many other authors who have made a reputation—to produce two or three books a year, to degenerate into the popular style, and to glide into a condition of brainless money-making. He stands aloof, gives the world a volume at long intervals, and is happily content that whatever he writes shall be literature.

Now that the book has appeared, it is more a story than a novel, as the preface explains; it is worth, however, very many ordinary novels. That the scene is laid in Kentucky almost goes without saying, and in the author's favourite manner it begins with a few pages of that pure and luminous description of which he is a master. Underneath the tranquil sentences a tone of sadness is heard, and yet not one single phrase could easily be selected as causing this; it lies rather in the steady, stately progression, the inherent solemnity of the diction, the immeasurable significance which seems to enfold that "grassy shield . . . tilted away from the dawn toward the sunset." Wonderfully beautiful are these opening pages.

There are only two characters in the story: a man and his wife in their prime; and the whole of the events happen within a couple of days. Perhaps "events" is too strong a term to use, since the book is a study of a crisis in the relationship of the man and the woman. The time is just before the Christmas festival; the man sits writing at his desk, finishing a task that had taken him twelve months. To him enters the woman, calling, and, as in former years, they go forth together into the frosty afternoon to choose a Christmas-tree for the enjoyment of the children. In a passage of retrospection the woman remembers her wedding-day; it had been Christmas Eve:—

"Of old it was written how on Christmas Night the Love that cannot fail us became human. My love for him, which is the divine thing in my life and which is never to fail him, shall become human on that night."

When the carriage had stopped at the front porch, he had led her into the house between the proud smiling servants of his establishment ranged at a respectful distance on each side; and without surrendering her even to her maid—a new spirit of silence on him—he had led her to her bedroom, to a place on the carpet under the chandelier. Leaving her there he had stepped backward and surveyed her waiting in her youth and loveliness—for him; come into his house, into his arms—his; no other's—never while life lasted to be another's even in thought or in desire.

Then, as if the marriage ceremony of the afternoon in the presence of many had meant nothing and this were the first moment when he could gather her home to him, he had come forward and taken her in his arms and set upon her the kiss of his house and his ardour and his duty. As his warm breath broke close against her face, his lips under their moustache, almost boyish then, had thoughtlessly formed one little phrase—one little but most lasting and fateful phrase:

"Bride of the Mistletoe!"

Looking up with a smile she saw that she stood under a bunch of mistletoe swung from the chandelier. Straightway he had forgotten his own words, nor did he ever afterwards know that he had used them. But she, out of their very sacredness as the first words he had spoken to her in his home, had remembered them most clingly. More than remembered them: she had set them to grow down into the fibres of her heart as the mistletoe roots itself upon the life-sap of the tree. And in all the later years they had been the green spot of verdure under life's dark skies—the undying bough into which the spirit of the whole tree retreats from the ice of the world:

"Bride of the Mistletoe!"

Through the first problem of learning to weld her nature to his wisely; through the perils of bearing children and the agony of seeing some of them pass away; through the ambition of having him rise in his profession and through the ideal of making his home an earthly paradise; through loneliness when he was away and joy whenever he came back—upon her whole life had rested the wintry benediction of that mystical phrase:

"Bride of the Mistletoe!"

The man's self-appointed task had been to gather from the four corners of the earth, by legend, by history, by myth and story, the meaning of the tree as a symbol. Until this night its burden had been kept secret from his wife. And with this secrecy, tender as he was to her, the ominous shadow of impending tragedy had fallen over her heart—she was no longer the first thing in the world to him, no longer absolutely necessary. He reads to her his work. She puts to him a series of poignant questions, and, summing up, reaches the last appeal in a quiet scene which almost compels the tears:—

"The friend of your youth—the friend of your middle age—the children—your profession—the world of human life—this house—the dogs of the house—you care more for them all as time passes?"

"I care more for them all as time passes."

Then there came a great stillness in the room—the stillness of all listening years.

"Am I the only thing that you care less for as time passes?"

There was no reply.

"Am I in the way?"

There was no reply.

"Would you like to go over it all again with another?"

There was no reply.

She had hidden her face in her hands and pressed her head against the end of the sofa. Her whole figure shrank lower, as though to escape being touched by him—to escape the blow of his words. No words came. There was no touch.

A moment later she felt that he must be standing over her, looking down at her. She would respond to his hand on the back of her neck. He must be kneeling beside her; his arms would enfold her. Then with a kind of incredible terror she realised that he was not there.

It is a scene almost cruel in its tenseness, its restraint, its suggestions of agony repressed; it is a tragedy of two souls, one of them striving to realise an awful sorrow—that of the cessation of communion. Over the ending of the story the spirit of Drayton's immortal sonnet seems to brood:—

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part,—
Nay, I have done, you get no more of me;

Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.

Yet this may not be the ending. In his introduction the author promises two more books which shall deal with the same people and with their children. We could wish them to be less sad than this epic of the forest, but while we regret that this time Mr. Allen has left his play of delicate humour entirely idle, we cannot but be grateful to him for so fine an addition to his Kentucky romances, and so fine a contribution, we would also say, to English literature.

SHORTER REVIEWS

Stories for Moral Instruction. By F. J. GOULD. (Watts and Co., 2s.)

THE instruction of the child in the elements of right and wrong, apart from the inevitable school routine of merely useful information, is one of those persistent problems which in these controversial days tend to become acute. It is not enough, of course, to teach children the shape and size and origin of the world they live in, its history and possibilities and peculiarities; they must have some notion of how to conduct themselves conformably to society's demands in their progress through it. This is that implicit education which would arrive naturally in nearly every case, since any violent collision of behaviour or language with the accepted customs brings about reprisals which are so certain that they might almost be termed automatic, intelligent and reasoning beings though their authors may be. But further than this, the beginner on life's tortuous way must be supported morally, must in some measure be fortified and informed as to the why and wherefore of these mysteries of right and wrong which soon are found to hedge him about so thickly, so bafflingly; and how to do this wisely and well, yet without losing the interest and attention of the child, is the difficulty which has puzzled many fine teachers and worried the brains of many excellent preachers.

Our grandparents and great-grandparents accomplished much by means of those quaint and innocuous "moral storybooks" which were the fare set plentifully before eager youth at that period of development. Stilted and dry enough these battered volumes seem to us to-day, and we may safely conclude that the children of the present would turn from them in distaste. This book, compiled by Mr. F. J. Gould, which we have before us, is therefore a little surprising; it almost seems a case of a return to the old-fashioned methods. We are aware that it is intended primarily for the use of teachers, and that it is not to be read directly by the children; but the thought occurs to us that a fairly large amount of modification will have to be performed by any tactful instructor before he can handle it to advantage. If he keeps to the stories and gives them baldly, so much the better, for the moral tags and smug little lessons tacked on to each page are rather too obvious; they have in some cases a distinct flavour of comicality. Children see through this sort of thing to-day. They resent "morals" and "applications." Tell them stories, by all means, but be very sure that the child is quite sharp enough to draw the necessary meaning without having it ladled up to him afterwards as though the jam preceded the pill. Some of these tales are taken from well-known books of fairy-stories. We fancy the average child would prefer to read the stories for himself or herself, and leave the sentences of precise application to the imagination of some well-meaning person like the author of this book. The healthy child detests anything approaching the "goody-goody" school. It is out of date, condemned by the precious little prigs it brought into being. After a story or two, under the heading of "Advice," Mr. Gould sees fit to expatiate as follows:—

When we want to do certain things, and our friends happen to advise us to do as we wish, all is well. The comb combs smoothly! But when our friends advise us to do something we do not wish to do, we perhaps think the friends crabby and ill-natured! The comb combs painfully! But that is our own fault. We may be wishing for something that is not good.

Of course, people's advice is not always good for us. But, if we know that they care for us and love us, we should listen to what they say.

Like the mole, they may know more about trees than we do ourselves.

Like the monkey, we may go wrong through not learning from other people all that they would willingly tell us.

Like the boy, we may not find our friends' advice pleasant, but we should remember that they desire our welfare.

Surely this sort of writing is labour wasted. There is plenty more of it. "Though your sword be rusty and your steed mean, your good hearts will achieve the victory

for the cause of the people"—a statement which is open to doubt. "Better to turn grey while serving the world than turn grey while living for our own sake alone." Here is the concluding "moral" from a tale entitled "The Sensible Woman":—

You and I cannot help smiling either! After all, the woman did no harm. The trick she played upon her husband was an innocent one. He was such a simpleton that I suppose she often had to manage him as if he were a child!

When we look round the world we find a good many simple folk, who think they are clever and fine fellows, and all the time they have to be governed by people who are more sensible.

Well, and that is the use of common sense. Those of us who have more wit than our neighbours must do our best to keep the world in order and improve it. You know how we are obliged to lock up insane people in asylums. In like manner we have to govern certain wild tribes of Africa and other regions. That is why it is nice to be wise and sensible, because it enables us to help the people who are not so well able to help themselves. We should do it with good humour, and as neighbours, and not in a stuck-up manner as if we felt ourselves to be a superior race.

The sententiousness of this is rather amusing. It verges on pomposity, and we fancy that most children would not gain much guidance from it; also, it is not very complimentary to the teacher that he should have his morals writ largely in front of him in such a hopelessly correct fashion.

The stories are all very well in themselves, and it was a happy idea to include "The Story of the Nibelungs" this is rendered in a very pleasant and comprehensive manner, and will doubtless be new to a great many children. Those who have charge of children will find the collection of so many tales and legends in a handy volume a great help in class-work, without doubt, and in this respect the book may be useful. They will prefer, however, if they have succeeded in setting up that sympathy with their little friends which is the basis of all good work in education, to omit the printed moral and leave the tale unadorned; the children may be trusted to read the hidden meanings, and, as far as our own experience goes, they most decidedly rebel at any attempt to "rub it in."

Dragon's Blood. By H. M. RIDEOUT. (Constable, 6s.)

As a realistic picture of life in an odd corner of the world—a Chinese village far from civilisation or communication with "Home"—we have rarely read anything more striking than this book. The whole European society of the settlement consists of six or seven men and three ladies, and the conditions of life are such that the situation becomes strained at times almost to breaking-point. A connecting thread of narrative is supplied by making one person, Rudolph Hackh, a young and impressionable German, the central point, and his infatuation for Mrs. Forrester, the coquette of the party, is related in a very keen and telling fashion. A rebellion of the natives of the district, which leads to a siege of the old nunnery whither the white people and the native Christians have taken refuge, is another strong part of the story, but the chief value lies in its impressions of the country, the awful solitude of such exile, the nervous dread of it all. A short passage may be quoted as an indication of the author's quality:—

Rudolph paced his long chamber like a wolf—a wolf in summer, with too thick a coat. In sweat of body and heat of mind, he crossed from window to window, unable to halt. A faintly sour smell of parched things, oppressing the night without breath or motion, was like an interminable presence, irritating, poisonous. Broad leaves outside shone in mockery of snow; and like snow the stifled river lay in the moonlight, where the wet muzzles of buffaloes glistened, floating like knots on sunken logs, or the snouts of crocodiles. Birds fluttered, sleepless and wretched. Coolies, flung asleep on the burnt grass, might have been corpses but for the sound of their troubled breathing. The lamp was an added torment. He sprang up from it, wiped the drops off his forehead, and paced again. The collar of his tunic strangled him. He stuffed his fingers underneath, and wrenched; then as he came and went, catching sight in a mirror, was shocked to see that in Biblical fashion he had rent his garments.

"This is bad," he thought, staring. "It is the heat. I must not stay alone." He shouted, clapped his hands for a servant.

and at last, snatching a coat from his unruffled boy, hurried away through stillness and moonlight to the detested club. On the stairs a song greeted him—a fragment with more breath than melody, in a raw bass:

"Jolly boating weather,
And a hay harvest breeze!"

"Shut up!" snarled another voice. "Good God, man!" The loft was like a cave heated by subterranean fires. Two long punkahs flapped languidly in the darkness, with a whine of pulleys. Under a swinging lamp, in a pool of light and heat, four men sat playing cards, their touselled heads, bare arms, and singlets torn open across the chest, giving them the air of desperadoes.

"Jolly boating weather," wheezed the fat Sturgeon. He stood apart in shadow, swaying on his feet. "What would you give," he propounded thickly, "for a hay harvest breeze?" He climbed, or rolled, upon the billiard-table, and suddenly lay still—a gross white figure, collapsed and sprawling.

"How much does he think a man can stand?" snapped Nesbit, his lean Cockney face pulled in savage lines. "Beast of a song! He'll die to-night, drinking." "Die yourself," mumbled the singer: "I'm goin' sleep. More'n you can do." A groan from the players, and the vicious flip of a card, acknowledged the hit.

We are sorry to note that after page 230 sixteen pages are omitted—or rather, that sixteen pages from a previous part of the book are repeated; and the pity of it is that the moment of break is an exciting time, and that the missing leaves do not turn up later on. This is probably no fault of the author, but it gives the reader an unpleasant jerk. There are four capital illustrations. We shall be glad to read the next volume from this author's pen. He has the skill to set down that which he has seen in words which are sometimes almost magical in their pictorial power.

The Voice of the Orient. By MRS. WALTER TIBBITS. (John Long, 3s. 6d. net.)

To read this rather remarkable book is to gain an impression as of a series of vividly coloured pictures passed rapidly before the eyes. Considered as a volume of description it is not unpleasing. Benares, Delhi, Simla, Bombay, and other cities of India flash on the mental vision as in strong sunlight, and their history and legends are touched upon in a manner which leaves no doubt as to the author's knowledge. She has, according to the publisher's note, identified herself with the Hindus, being a member for months together of a native family of high standing, and therefore must be presumed to write with some degree of authority.

As to the quality of the book itself, we cannot say that it seems deserving of a distinguished place. Many of the passages are characterised by too much warmth and voluptuousness, a straining after effects of richness which pall on the brain as a meal of sweets would offend the body. "Passionate remembrance" and "fervid loves" follow one another too often. This kind of writing should be used sparingly, if at all: "The smell of the earth gasping a few hours before the rain falls is as a tortured heart clamouring for the withheld wine of love." The orange creeper bignonia venusta hung in cascades of fiery passion from the peepul to cool its flames below in the snow drifts of the syringa's maiden purity." The sentences leave far too many verbs as understood, and are loosely constructed. Two extracts will illustrate this, and also some poor composition: "Then in the foreground the lovely colour scheme of the delicate cloud of pink peach blossom, palpitating on its brown leafless branches against the cobalt sky, making a fit frame for a fair woman's face and exquisite as a scene on a Watteau fan in its dainty painting, or again, gladdening the sombre depths of a background of dark deodars standing sentinel-like on the khud." "Never before had I remained at the summer capital so late in the year, always had I left before the gay-plumaged birds of fashion had migrated south for their winter quarters, and the Mall did indeed present a dismal appearance, peopled mainly by staggering coolies bearing on their backs cruelly heavy packs, but not heavier than the weights borne by many a human heart at the season's wane." This latter sentence

—if such it may be called—would disgrace a schoolboy. The illustrations are excellent, and the stories of ancient India are well told.

ITALIAN BACKGROUNDS—IV

DESOLATE PLACES.

Two places seem more eloquent than any other of the beauty of desolation and decay—Venice, and the little neighbouring island of Torcello. The latter is obviously fallen from greatness, and the quick-eyed lizards run to and fro upon the grass that hides the once populous market-place; but Venice, it may be said, is no desert. No; but its peculiar beauty is fed and nourished by that spirit of decay, which gives even to a battered peep-show something significant and venerable—the sense that Time's "wreckful siege" is being laid to the piles of white poplar wood driven into the mud of its lagoons, and that the wash and hurry of the steamboats up and down the Grand Canal are all contributing to an inevitable destruction. It has the imaginative charm of Piranesi's etchings of the Carceri, which are the wildest picture of greatness in decay, and the magnificent fantasies of dilapidation.

How many travellers since John Evelyn have paid their tribute to the "surprising sight of this miraculous city lying in the bosom of the sea in the shape of a lute." What is its secret? Not the strangeness of its foretaste of the East; not the double gift of light in water and sky; not the perpetual architecture above and the perpetual water-mirror below; not those pale green waterways that contrast with the earthen or stony pavement of other cities, whose heads may be of fine gold and whose breasts of silver, but whose feet are of clay? It is the city of mirage, of the eternal harmony of art, with its skies paving with bright images the broad and narrow streets, and the vast expanse of sea that stretches away in leagues of rippling lustre, its sea upon which the vision of the city seems to change and evaporate, and to multiply all its agitated reflections, which lie beneath it like deep bases for eternity. Its palaces, dim and splendid, with their black boats moored at their door, have each their image printed beneath their base, upon that green pavement, in colours more intense than the real objects, so that the mingling reds and whites upon the canal glow like veined marble. "Est-ce l'eau qui reflète le ciel, ou le ciel qui reflète l'eau? L'œil hésite, et tout se confonde dans un éblouissement général." And everywhere, and at all hours, Venice aspires to the condition of music; in its streets the very weeping of the suspended oar, the blow of the gondola on the water, becomes music.

An attempt to see for one moment the whole of the triumphant yet decaying city—Venice enthroned—brings back but a number of little pictures, that seem to express one facet of this vast many-sided jewel slowly sinking into the mud of the lagoons. "When I hear, when I see," writes Henry James, "the magical name I have written, it is not of the great square that I think, with its strange basilica and its high arcades, nor of the wide mouth of the Grand Canal, with the stately steps and the well-poised dome of the Salute; it is not of the low lagoon, nor the sweet Piazzetta, nor the dark chambers of St. Mark's. I simply see a narrow canal in the heart of the city—a patch of green water and a surface of pink wall. A girl is passing over the little bridge, which has an arch like a camel's back, with an old shawl on her head, which makes her look charming as you see her against the sky as you float beneath. The pink of the old wall seems to fill the whole place; it sinks even into the opaque water."

So, to me, the best remembered, if not the most memorable things of Venice, are a snowy cataract of banksia roses, over the brick wall of a garden terrace; a patch of green sun-irradiated vines, seen within an open door of a small garden, dotting the paved path with their vibrating

shadows; a quiet waterway, with green weeds leaking upon the low flight of water-steps, under a cavernous doorway of a palace; the transparent water washing about the weedy basements of the houses, the sunlight weaving a Coan robe of wide-meshed gauze that ripples up and down beneath the arch of a narrow high-backed bridge; the time-worn plaster, peeling in flakes from the façade of a degraded palace, where rags, orange and red and vari-coloured, hang from a delicate iron balcony in an admired disorder; the silhouette of the "black Triton of the lagoons" lifting its steely halberd-like head and throwing it backwards a little, moving, and yet seeming not to move; the patches of colour in the little shrines; a garden in the Giudecca with a mat of roses underfoot, and the grey sea beyond its wall, which seemed, like the flowers, to break into flower and rustle and shine.

The evening sky, too, seen above the sea from between the lion of St. Mark and St. Theodore, when the softly tinged floor of flaky clouds floats, as it floats between the arcades of Venonese's Banquet in the house of Levi; and lastly, at night, the Piazza, when the opaque jewel of St. Mark has paled its fires, and the delicate crown-like ornaments against the walls of the Ducal Palace are sharp against the deep-hued sky, and the flames of golden gas upon the standards tremble in the light breeze like the leaves on some golden autumnal tree; or the sea, when the air rings with the singing of a boatful of musicians, while a hundred twinkling lights shine on the little facets of the waves, spangled like a dancer's skirt, the gondolas pass and re-pass with lamps or coloured lanterns moving mysteriously in the darkness, and the mellowing of the salt sea air, the incomparable chiselling of time, and the incomparable colouring of neglect in house and palace are lost in the largeness of the evening air. It is in these glimpses that the city has a beauty more intimate than it must have known in its prosperity, when the capitals, friezes, and archivolts of St. Marks and the Ducal Palace were gilded and enriched with blue and vermilion, and when the three tall flagstaffs in the Piazza ascended lightly into the air from Leopard's bronze sockets, bearing the standards of dominion over Cyprus, and Greece, and Crete.

From the decay of the city to the desolation of Torcello is no long journey. The poor and almost deserted island lies north of Venice, and for some distance its tall square campanile rises into view, poised over the grey vaporous water. It may be approached by a narrow canal, whose banks are sweet with the fragrance of acacias; and, passing under a decayed and weed-grown bridge, the edge of a sloping plot of grass is reached, staged by the water's side by a few grey stones, which present some semblance of a quay. Once the populous market-place of an important city, it is "hardly larger than an English farmyard." It is crossed by a faint track, leading to a small square, with grey buildings on three sides; and, lying humbly in the rough grass, is a rude stone seat, called Attila's Throne. Behind the larger of the two churches a narrow footpath traverses the desolate sea-moor, which is overgrown with greyish grass, and purple vetches, and ground ivy—a waste the colour of sackcloth, with stagnant water shining in its inlets and channels. The brown lizards dart swift as a weaver's shuttle through the web of pale-hued grasses; indeed, the only note of brilliant colour in the island seemed to be a leafless bush, overhanging one of these scummy and tangled water-channels, which was entirely coated with a vivid orange lichen, and over it hung for a moment an orange-tawny and a blue butterfly, like a petal of blue flame, rimmed with white. Over the low island hung the sky, pale as the flower of flax, and brushed over with films of white cirrus cloud, blown heedlessly about the expanse like thistledown in autumn. To the north and west is a blue strip of shore, and further back a purple bank of mountains, very far away, while to the east streams the uninterrupted Adriatic, and to the south Venice is visible, with its towers.

Everywhere scattered among the grass and grass-grown cloisters of the smaller church are fragments of history—a well-head, and carved stones from the recesses of the

Byzantine church, with a green film of mould picking out the background of its curious emblems. "The charm of the place, the strange desolation of its deeply interesting little cathedral of the eighth century, which stood there on the edge of the sea, as touching in its ruin, with its grassy threshold and its primitive mosaics, as the bleached bones of a human skeleton washed ashore by the tide, has well-nigh vanished," affirms one writer. It must have been even more neglected and deserted, but even to-day a spirit of desolation moves upon the flat land of illimitable horizons, upon the shrubby mulberries and solitary ill-grown fig-tree, and upon the leagues of rippling sea, inlaid with lights of blue and steel, dotted with the patched yellow and orange sails of the fishing craft, that are poised, like the tawny butterflies upon the humble flowers of the marsh, upon the face of the waters. M. J.

EDINBURGH IN THE TIME OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

Nor London, but Edinburgh, at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, from the death of Dr. Johnson in 1784 to that of Sir Walter Scott in 1832, was the intellectual centre of the kingdom. It could hardly be otherwise, for living at that time in the Scottish capital were Robertson, the historian; Hugh Blair, John Horne, the author of "Douglas"; Henry Mackenzie, "The Man of Feeling"; John Leyden; Dugald Stewart; and John Wilson, the grand old Christopher North. Frequently there—indeed, spending important portions of their lives there—were Adam Smith, Thomas Campbell, Lady Nairne, Thomas De Quincey, Sir James Macintosh, and Sydney Smith. Then there were the publishers, the Ballantynes, the Constables, the Blackwoods. The influence of the *Edinburgh Review* in the day of countless publications can hardly be realised, and John Gibson Lockhart, a Scotsman and son-in-law of Sir Walter, was editor of its great rival in London, *The Quarterly*. Edinburgh was a national metropolis. Its society was distinctly Scottish. The judges were men of great intellectual force. Lord Hailes, the antagonist of Gibbon, and Lord Monboddo, who in some sense anticipated a discovery of Mr. Darwin, lived on to the close of the eighteenth century; and in the early nineteenth their reputation was sustained by Lord Woodhouselee, Lord Jeffrey, and Lord Cockburn. Other of the judges were notable for force of character, like Lord Braxfield, now familiar as "Weir of Hermiston," or for mere eccentricity, like Lord Eskgrove, one of the strangest beings who ever added to the gaiety of mankind.

And the centre of this remarkable society was Sir Walter Scott, great as a poet, great as a novelist, great as a man—

"O great and gallant Scott!

True gentleman, heart, blood, and bone,

I would it had been my lot

To have seen thee and heard thee and known."

My description of Edinburgh and its people in the time of Scott will be no detailed or consecutive one. I just take facts as I come across them in Mr. Fyfe's excellent and interesting book.

Coachbuilding had become one of the most important industries of Edinburgh. Paris was once reputed to have been the place to order your carriage from. Now Edinburgh became the vogue. It is said that about 1783 a coachbuilder there received an order from Paris for one thousand coaches. And in the city itself the number of four-wheeled carriages increased from 396 to 1,268. Drapers' shops and hairdressers vastly increased in numbers. Oyster-cellars became numerous, and people of fashion used to hold their private dances there. Umbrellas were beginning to be seen in the streets. Scott went to school in clumsy shoes made to be used for either foot, each requiring to be used on alternate feet daily. With these on his feet he was taught at the High School

by Dr. Adams, whose last words we can never forget: "But it grows dark—the boys may dismiss"; and where he wrote his first verse, carefully kept by his mother, docketed "My Walter's first lines, 1782."

Thereafter he went to the University, and was taught among others by Mr. Hill, whose Latin class was "the rowdiest" in the University, and by Professor Dalziel, Clerk to the General Assembly and Professor of Greek, whom Sydney Smith declared he heard one dark night muttering to himself in the street: "If it had not been for that confounded Solemn League and Covenant, we would have made as good longs and shorts as the Episcopalians." Also by Dugald Stewart, in whose very spitting Lord Cockburn is alleged to have said there was eloquence, and whose lectures were "like the openings of the heavens."

Scott would attend as a young man, though his lameness kept him from dancing, the fashionable assemblies in George Square, "and here were the last remains of the ball-room discipline of the preceding age. Martinet dowagers and venerable beaux acted as masters and mistresses of ceremonies, and made all the preliminary arrangements. No couple could dance unless each party was provided with a ticket prescribing the precise place in the precise dance. If there was no ticket, the gentleman or the lady was dealt with as an intruder and turned out of the dance. If the ticket had marked upon it, say, for a country dance, the figures 3, 5, this meant that the holder was to place himself in the third dance and fifth from the top; and if he was anywhere else he was set right or excluded. And the partner's ticket must correspond. Woe to the girl who with a ticket, 2, 7, was found opposite a youth marked 5, 9. It was flirting without a licence and looked very ill, and would probably be reported by the ticket director of that dance to the mother. Of course parties or parents who wished to secure dancing for themselves or those they had charge of provided themselves with correct and corresponding vouchers before the ball day arrived. This could only be accomplished through a director; and the election of a Pope sometimes requires less jobbing. . . . Tea was sipped in side-rooms, and he was a careless beau who did not present his partner with an orange at the end of each dance; and the orange and the tea, like everything else, were under exact and positive regulations.

"The prevailing dinner-hour was about three o'clock. Two o'clock was quite common, if there was no company. Hence it was no great hardship to dine on Sunday between sermons—between one and two o'clock. The hour in time, Lord Cockburn tells us, but not without groans and predictions, became four, at which it stuck for several years. Then it got to five, which, however, was thought positively revolutionary; and four was long and gallantly adhered to by the haters of change as "the good old hour." At last even they were obliged to give in. But they only yielded inch by inch, and made a desperate stand at half-past four. Even five, however, triumphed and continued the average polite hour from (I think) about 1806 or 1807 till about 1820. Six has at last prevailed, and half an hour later is not unusual. As yet though this is the furthest stretch of London imitation. . . . Thus within my memory, the hour has ranged from two to half-past six o'clock: and a stand has been regularly made at the end of every half-hour against each encroachment; and always on the same grounds—dislike of change and jealousy of finery."

Mr. Oldbuck, of Monkbarrow, it will be remembered, who flourished circa 1804, invited his guests to the famous cœnobotical symposium at four o'clock precisely. It may be presumed that the Antiquary in this matter, however, lingered a little in the rear of the fashion. The dishes at the symposium comprehended "many savoury specimens of Scottish viands now disused at the tables of those who affect elegance—hotch-potch, 'the relishing Solan goose,' fish and sauce, crappet-heads, and chicken pie. The Antiquary's beverage was port, a wine highly approved of by the clerical friend, who ably disposed of the relics of the feast intended for the worthy host's supper.

The ladies went into dinner by themselves in a regular row, according to the ordinary rules of precedence, and waited, lingering behind the backs of their chairs, until the gentlemen came in in single file, also in the order of priority, and partners were selected. Champagne did not come into fashion until the Peace of 1815. Claret was free from duty until about 1780, and was the ordinary beverage. I have heard Henry Mackenzie and other old people say that, when a cargo of claret came to Leith, the common way of proclaiming its arrival was by sending a hogshead of it through the town on a cart, with a horn, and that anybody who wanted a sample, or a drink under pretence of a sample, had only to go to the cart with a jug, which, without much nicety about its size, was filled for a sixpence. The tax ended this mode of advertising, and, aided by the horror of everything French, drove claret from all tables below the richest. It was the day for healths and toasts. Every glass of wine taken at dinner was dedicated to the health of some one, and to drink without this was thought to be sottish and rude; as if, forsooth, there was nobody present worth drinking with. Wine was very rarely on the table, and when you wanted to drink with some one you called aloud for the wine and named your partner. You could slay your friends "by coveys," proclaiming to the sideboard, "A glass of sherry for Mr. Dundas, Mrs. Murray, and Miss Hope, and a glass of port for Mr. Hume, and one for me." "Your good health!" followed as you made obeisance to one after the other with a polite bow, a smile, and your hand on your heart. This during dinner while the ladies were still present. Then when they left, the "rounds" of toasts began. A lady was named by one, a partner for her mentioned by another, and their healths were drunk. Then there were "sentiments" such as, "May the pleasures of the evening bear the reflections of the morning"; "May the friends of our youth be the companions of our old age"; "Delicate pleasures to susceptible minds"; "May the honest heart never feel distress"; "May the hand of charity wipe the tear from the eye of sorrow"; "May never worse be among us." It took some courage and invention to do this, and there is a story told of the poor dominee of Andelly, after much blushing, writhing, and groaning, coming out with "The reflection of the moon in the cawm bosom of the lake." The health of the King was never neglected at the family dinner table, even when no company were present.

One of Scott's friends was Dr. William Robertson, described in "Guy Mannering" by Mr. Pleydell with some pride as "our historian of Scotland, of the Continent, and of America." He succeeded his father as minister of Old Greyfriars' Church, to which Pleydell conducts Colonel Mannering to hear him preach. He was greater as a church leader and a man of letters than as a preacher. He was "essentially a literary artist." Conscientious and prolonged research gave a value to his historical works which largely atoned for the monotony of his somewhat too ornate and dignified style. He has the glory, and that, too, when Samuel Johnson was at his zenith, of having established a record in literary remuneration. For his history of Charles V. he received £4,500, the largest sum which had till then been paid for a single work.

When Colonel Mannering and Mr. Pleydell went to Greyfriars' Church to hear Dr. Robertson, they found, somewhat to their disappointment, that the great historian was not to be the preacher that morning. "Never mind," said the counsellor, "have a moment's patience, and we shall do very well," and Robertson's colleague, Dr. John Erskine, appeared. "This preacher seems a very ungainly person," said Mannering. "Never fear, he's the son of an excellent Scottish lawyer; he'll show blood, I'll warrant him." The learned counsellor predicted truly; and Mannering is fain to admit that he had seldom heard so much learning, metaphysical acuteness, and energy of argument brought into the service of Christianity.

Speaking of Robertson and Erskine's notorious difference in regard to Church government, Mannering asks the advo-

cate what he thinks of these points of difference. "Why, I hope, Colonel, a plain man may go to heaven without thinking about them at all." And there spoke Scott himself.

Professor Adam Ferguson was another friend. He was a strict abstainer both from wine and animal food. He seldom dined out on this account, except with his relative Dr. Joseph Black, a kindred spirit; and his son used to say it was delightful to see the two philosophers rioting over a boiled turnip! The death of Dr. Joseph Black, the eminent chemist, was as quiet and peaceable as his life. "He died seated with a bowl of milk on his knee, of which his ceasing to live did not spill a drop; a departure which, it seemed, after the event happened, might have been foretold of this attenuated philosophical gentleman."

Dr. Robert Henry, the historian, died in a similarly quiet manner. Four days before his death he wrote to Sir Harry Moncrieff, "Come out here, directly; I have got something to do this week. I have got to die." While Sir Harry and he were sitting together, and he, in his easy chair, was dozing and talking by turns, a neighbouring minister, who was a notorious and much-dreaded bore, came to call. "Keep him out!" cried the Doctor; "don't let the creature in here." It was too late, the creature entered; but when he came in the Doctor was to all appearance fast asleep. Moncrieff, at once taking in the situation, signed to the visitor to be silent. The visitor sat down, apparently to wait till Dr. Henry might awake. Every time he offered to speak, he was checked by solemn gestures from Moncrieff or Mrs. Henry. So he sat on, all in solemn silence, for above a quarter of an hour, during which Sir Henry occasionally detected the dying man peeping cautiously through the fringes of his eyelids to see how his visitor was coming on. At last, Sir Henry tired, and he and Mrs. Henry, pointing to the poor doctor, fairly waved the visitor out of the room; on which the doctor opened his eyes wide and had a tolerably hearty laugh, which was renewed when the sound of the horse's feet made them certain that their friend was actually off the premises. Dr. Henry died that night. In his "History of Great Britain" Dr. Henry was the forerunner of Macaulay and Green.

Socially, Scotland was just emerging from roughness and ignorance. Scott tells of "a dame of no small quality, the worshipful Lady Pumphraston, who buttered a pound of green tea, sent her as an exquisite delicacy, dressed it as a condiment to a rump of salt beef, and complained that no degree of boiling would render those foreign greens tender. "There was, however, no real vulgarity about the people, and in the Scots tongue of that day the vowels were not pronounced much broader than in the Italian language, and there was none of the disagreeable drawl which is so offensive to modern ears. The ladies were like Scott's Mrs. Bethune; it seemed to be the Scotch spoken by the ancient Court of Scotland, to which no idea of vulgarity could be attached."

Even Miss Sophia ("Sophy") Johnson, notwithstanding her man's hat and indoor garment like a great-coat, buttoned closely from the chin to the ground, worsted stockings, strong shoes, with large brass clasps, was a lady, whose company was much prized by the fashionable and aristocratic, as it well might be, for she had rare intellectual powers, and her talk was racy, spiced with anecdote, and shrewd, often sarcastic, observation. She and some other of the ladies of that day were as stout in heart as they were strong in arm. When Miss "Sophy's" strength was giving way, the famous Dr. Gregory cautioned her to leave off animal food and be content with "spoon meat," unless she wished to die. "Dee, doctor; odd! I'm thinking they've forgotten an auld wife like me up yonder." And when the doctor called next day he found her spoon meat consisted of a haggis!

Then there was Miss Meenie Trotter, of the Mortonhall family, who, till within a few years of her death, could do her ten miles of a walk. I seem to have known the story of her dream all my life. When, shortly before her death, she was asked how she was, she answered: "Very weel—quite weel. But eh! I had a dismal dream last

night: a fearful dream!" "Ay! I'm sorry for that. What was it?" "An' what dy'e think? Of a' the places in the world, I dreamed I were in Heaven! And what d'ye think I saw there? Deil ha'et, but thoosands upon thoosands, and ten thoosands upon ten thoosands, o' stark naked weans! That wad be a dreadfu' thing, for ye ken I ne'er could bide bairns a' my days."

Scott and his friend Clark were admitted to the Faculty of Advocates on the 11th July, 1792. When the ceremony of "putting on the gown" was completed, Scott said to Clark, putting on the air and tone of some Highland lassie waiting at the Cross to be "fee'd for the harvest." "We've stood here an hour by the Tron, hinny, an' deil a one has speird our price." The friends were about to leave the outer court, when a friend, a solicitor, came up and gave Scott his first guinea fee. As he and Clark went down the High Street, they passed a hosier's shop, and Scott remarked, "This is a sort of wedding day, Willie. I think I must go in and buy me a new night-cap." Thus he "warded" his guinea. But it is pleasing to know that his first big fee was spent on a silver letter-stand for his mother, which (Lockhart tells) the old lady used to point to with great satisfaction as it stood on her chimney-piece five-and-twenty years afterwards. Almost the only story Cockburn ever heard of Lord Braxfield that had some fun in it without immodesty was when a butler gave up his place because his lordship's wife was always scolding him. "Lord!" he exclaimed, "ye've little to complain o'; ye may be thankfu' ye're no married to her." It was he who said to Masgarot, one of the Friends of the People, who made a speech in his own defence, "Ye're a very clever chiel, man, but ye wad be nane that waur o' a-hanging." If some political prosecution seemed in danger of being marred by anticipated difficulties, he would say, "Let them bring me prisoners, and I'll find them law." Before Hume's "Commentaries" had made criminal law intelligible, the forms and precedent were a mystery understood by the initiated alone, and by nobody so much as by Mr. Joseph Norrie's, the ancient clerk. Braxfield used to squash anticipated doubts by saying, "Hoot! just gie me Josie Norrie and a gude jury, an' I'll doo for the fallow!" "Come awa', Mr. Horner," he said one day to the father of Francis Horner; "come awa', and help me tae hang one o' thae damned seondrels!" "All great men were reformers," said Gerald on trial, "even our Saviour Himself." "Muckle he made o' that," chuckled Braxfield in an undertone; "he was hanget"—which was his phrase for all kinds of punishment.

MUSICAL CRITICISM

It is a matter of grave concern to all sincere music-lovers that the many and apparently conflicting tendencies of contemporary music are causing a considerable amount of confusion which few attempt to dispel. The most subtle of the arts is badly served by her scribes, most of whom think more of their inherited faith, or the furtherance of the movements they favour, than of the enrichment of the art as a whole. This gives rise to the suspicion that their conception of æsthetics may in some respects be incomplete, which would not be surprising, inasmuch as the present feverish mode of living reacts detrimentally on the more contemplative faculties from which alone, with the help of the natural critical instinct, a settled æsthetic creed can be evolved. Whatever the reason, the functions of the present day musical critic appear to be limited to those of the chronicler, with liberty to record his personal appreciation, or the reverse, of the events with which he is concerned, all of which is very useful, and even illuminating, without, however, constituting criticism in the sense in which we speak of literary criticism or the writings of Pater. The reason is not difficult to detect. The most daring literary critic worthy of the name does not hope to express himself authoritatively without a close analytical scrutiny of the literature

preceding his period, its moods and movements, its faiths and heresies; in other words, the atavistic influences he will have to examine in their relation to the ideas of the succeeding era. He is not satisfied with the classical knowledge imparted at his University, but turns his attention to his contemporaries, and, at the cost of much labour, finally reaches a stage at which his praise of a book will mean not merely that it has given him pleasure which might be attributed to a thousand irrelevant circumstances, but that it is essentially a remarkable achievement in letters. The musical critic, on the other hand, has, or has not, as the case may be, followed the official curriculum of musical grammar, incidentally examining a few works of a period remote from his own. He becomes acquainted with the classics by frequent hearings only, and is mildly tolerant of more recent developments, as far as he fortuitously meets with them at isolated performances, until some special phase arouses a subconscious sympathy, and he becomes a partisan of what seems to him a new art, because he has no comprehensive view of the phenomena of which it is, maybe a symptom, maybe the result. It follows that, whereas a good literary critic will convey some idea of the nature, intention, and quality of a book, the morning after the performance of a new symphony we gather from the press who liked it and who did not, but scarcely a word as to the place it is entitled to occupy in the annals of the art. That musicians themselves should be almost as vaguely informed as the average critic is of less consequence. They are primarily concerned with their personal art, whether creative or interpretative, and though in the latter case a wider range of musical acquaintance would undoubtedly be to their artistic advantage, in the former it is at least an open question. Individual expression varies in sensitiveness in inverse proportion to its intensity, and it is conceivable that a composer of more delicate phantasy might endanger his personality by a too close study of his contemporaries. In any case the point has scant bearing on our subject. Musicians have little time, and apparently small inclination, to consider the æsthetics of modern music, and composers are notoriously bad critics.

The initial qualification of the critic consists in the possession to an unusual degree of an innate sense of quality, coupled with the power, innate or acquired, of segregating that sense from the influence of his personal leanings. The purely feminine approval or rejection of the products of the creative mind, far from being in any way worthy of the name of criticism, is directly antagonistic to that equipoise of the mind without which true criticism is impossible. The reasons why a certain individual responds to the appeal of a work of art may be so many and so varied, and so entirely independent of its value, that a judgment based upon such grounds has scarcely any likelihood of being well balanced. This is particularly the case with music. Even the momentary physical condition of the listener may affect his first hearing of a new work, not to speak of the degree of comfort which surrounds him. If the conditions are conducive to cheerfulness, a work of tragic significance will appear to him morbid. If his mood of the moment is tinged with gloom, all joy in music will seem vulgar. If he is of a romantic disposition, a work of architectural magnificence will seem to him cold, and if he has the mathematical turn of mind, an eloquent emotion will sound maudlin.

Racial characteristics play an important part in the exercise of the critical faculty in music. It has become a commonplace to speak of music as a universal language, because its notation and vocabulary are international. But if a variety of races possessed a common language, the ideas it served to express would still be as far apart. It is easy to conceive that two divergent peoples could be mutually understood in the dictionary sense, and mutually unintelligible in their more subtle and characteristic utterances. That is precisely what frequently happens in music. The typical Englishman is sentimental, the typical Frenchman sceptical. Hence, for instance, the popularity in this country of Tchaikovsky's *Pathetic Symphony*.

which has met with frank intolerance in France. French critics profess their inability to understand what our audiences have found to admire in that work. Our own writers would probably describe them as impervious to fine music, if they were cognisant of this attitude. Fortunately for them, their insularity preserves them from such rude shocks; they are simply unaware of Continental opinion.

Many similar instances could be given, but this one suffices to show that the critic must learn to suppress his individual or racial inclinations if he is to secure the independent exercise of his sense of quality. The actual mode of musical diction differs widely from one country to another, and bears a close relation to language itself. Thus the German is always explanatory. Many of the finest German writers are unable to pen the most obvious statement without propounding a wholly superfluous justification. The corresponding phenomenon in music is that, when the course of the development of a musical idea has been sufficiently indicated, the German composer can rarely resist his natural inclination nevertheless to carry the discussion through to the end. A skilful musician can frequently deduce from one page of such a work the six pages which are to follow.

To a French listener that method spells nothing but boredom. His alert mind promptly seizes upon the train of thought, and whilst it is still being made musically clear, he is already asking, "Et après?" He is eternally curious, and resents the obvious as an impertinence. Therefore, the same work, which a German critic will describe as a masterly development of musical material will be pronounced tedious by his French confrère.

Musical England has so long been under foreign domination that the national characteristics have become almost obliterated. Whereas the German explains, and the Frenchman suggests, it is more natural to the Englishman to assert. To convince an audience of his countrymen he must assert several times, preferably with increasing force, that which he has to say. If he attempts a logical exposition he will meet with indifference. If he is subtle, his points will be missed. But if he becomes more and more emphatic, he will end by securing adherents. Our native composers are still engaged in a violent struggle to secure musical independence, but already there are signs that, when free of foreign influences, this is the form their musical diction will take.

The ideal critic should possess a mind sufficiently elastic to accommodate himself to every mode of diction, which, after all, is merely a means of communicating musical ideas. He is mainly concerned with the latter, and though he must, *ex officio*, take note of the trappings in which they are presented, he must be able to judge of their quality, whether their garb be familiar or exotic, homely or splendid.

But it is manifestly hopeless for him to attempt to record more than an unreliable personal impression after one hearing of a complex work. One of the most erudite of living musicians, Vincent d'Indy, openly admits his inability to grasp even the essentials of an important composition unless he has heard it several times at close intervals, or made it the object of careful study. There is nothing surprising in this. Those arts which express themselves through a succession of detail, such as music and poetry, make a greater demand on the synthetic faculty than the plastic arts, which present the whole simultaneously with its parts. A modern symphony lasts, as a rule, nearly an hour. No literary critic would care to commit himself to an opinion on a poem the recitation of which occupied the same time, without having carefully perused the text at his leisure. Yet that is what is done daily by musical critics; and that the language of music is more elusive than that of poetry is readily conceded.

As a preliminary to the due appreciation of contemporary music, the critic must be thoroughly familiar with all the landmarks of musical progress. He must have analysed the various tendencies of music and arrived at a method of classification which covers the entire gamut

from the intellectual aridity of *Kapellmeister-Musik* to the banality of the music-hall song, the two poles of present-day music. He must be competent to discern the presence and proportion of the elements due to each function of musical expression, the manner in which they are presented, and the felicity with which they are co-ordinated. That cannot be achieved in any complete sense without an intimate understanding of the whole range of musical æsthetics, failing which the critic must inevitably be swayed by his personal tastes and sympathies. A too subservient attitude towards the latter can only lead to an *ex parte* expression of opinion, valuable as such in proportion to the natural taste of the critic, but devoid of constructive importance. Beauty, being a relative quality, is measured by the sum of its manifestations, knowledge of which is the basis of all true criticism. The immensity of his subject, once completely realised, soon makes the critic aware of the comparative unimportance of his own likes and dislikes to æsthetic analysis; but if the consciousness of having acquired the true critical insight should ever tempt him to become presumptuous, or judicial, let him remember the immortal failure of Ruskin to detect the hyperæsthesia of the Whistlerian colour sense.

Side by side with the broader issues, there have always been subordinate movements, of which only those of the present or most recent past concern the critic unless he elect to be also an historian. He should be acquainted with the interesting resuscitation of primitive material variously treated, which was incidental to the rise of the remoter musical nationalities, Bohemia, Scandinavia, and Russia, and the consequent controversy in the latter country, now happily ended, between the partisans of the Nationalists and those who advocated a more eclectic view of music. He should also appreciate the causes of the revolt of most French composers, and in recent years a few Englishmen, against the tyrannical domination of the German mode of musical expression, which, with all its undeniable excellencies, is primarily a vehicle for German thought and not entitled to impose itself on nations with such wide temperamental divergencies. In France the main heat of the battle is on the lyric stage; in England it has scarcely commenced; but in both countries it is evident to the thoughtful observer that a far greater elasticity is necessary to the general progress of music than the Germans are prepared to concede. That their needs were historically among the first to be considered is due to the uninterrupted succession of great composers of their nationality, whose achievements justify the pride, but not the exclusiveness, of their countrymen.

The question of the degree of actual technical knowledge, if any, necessary to the critic, is an interesting one admitting of much argument. It is so difficult when one has acquired any kind of technique, to remember that its restraining laws are not administrative, but empirical, and therefore liable to be rendered obsolete at any moment by further experiment. It is precisely their inability to refrain from administering the laws as they know them which renders unreliable the judgment of most composers and official musicians. Of course, the critic should be able to read music and grasp the form and intention of a composition, but fundamentally it appears evident that, however equipped, the man who could be deceived by defective or clumsy craftsmanship would have mistaken his vocation, as his critical instinct could only be of the meanest order. He should be quite capable of feeling the quality of the technique displayed, by the same intuitive process which prevents a man of culture, but no technical knowledge, from filling his cabinet with Brummagem, or hanging his walls with daubs. On the other hand, his authority can be materially strengthened by knowledge of musical theory, but not of a musical theory. As commonly understood, the word merely covers the official curriculum which deals with an infinitesimal portion of the whole theory of music, and is mostly inherited from the decorative period. The laws even of thematic metamorphosis, a by no means recent innovation, are not yet codified, nor can the effec-

tive dissonances of Borodine or the finely shaded harmonies of Cesar Franck be reduced to theory as taught. All except the most recent text-books deal with two scales instead of the many used by modern composers. The minute, somewhat meticulous, chromaticism and incessant self-interruption of Reger; the apparently arbitrary and yet plausible part-writing of Strauss; the consecutive independent sonorities of Debussy, are all matters of technique with which the critic, to be consistent, must grapple, if technical knowledge is essential to his task. Even then he may at any moment be confronted with a problem not to be solved by all his philosophy. The composer of original personality makes technique in defiance of the schools, and to be thorough in this respect the critic would have to be familiar *beforehand* with the technique of each new star appearing on the horizon, otherwise how can he appraise it? Official knowledge will frequently only prejudice him against the unfettered working of his æsthetic judgment.

No; let him absorb whatever quantity of theory he considers conducive to his purpose, but the fact will remain that the training of the critic is criticism. He must devour an immense quantity of music of all styles and periods, not merely by hearing it, but by careful analysis and comparison in the study, until the whole subject of musical æsthetics begins to take shape in his mind. He must know two or three languages in order to keep abreast of every movement in the world of music, of which we in England feel some occasional backwash. He must be an omnivorous reader and follow with a certain degree of competence the phenomena presented by the literature and plastic arts of his own and the preceding generation, because of their enormous reaction on music. Romanticism in Germany; poetic symbolism and the so-called decadence in France; impressionism in painting; all these are matters appertaining to his art, in ignorance of which he will ever be at a loss to discern the precise significance of the art-work before him. He must be a master of a certain literary impressionism, in order to be able to reproduce for others the effect of the music he has heard. It will take the best years of his life and no small amount of money to equip him, as his library and musical experience must be as complete as possible, and when at last he is able to account to himself, logically and dispassionately, for every shade of every conclusion he arrives at, he will find himself contradicted by the first comer, who will tell him that it is all a matter of opinion.

CORRESPONDENCE

MORE ABOUT THE GENIUS OF GEORGE MEREDITH.

To the Editor of THE ACADEMY.

SIR,—Possibly I may have been a little too heedless of the tender susceptibilities of the "select few" who really believe, or profess to believe, that they quite "understand" the entire works of George Meredith, when I wrote as I did in *THE ACADEMY* lately; and I should therefore apologise in some measure for my "too positive" expressions in such connection. For it is ever objectionable, and a violation of good taste, in a reviewer, or "self-constituted critic," to so much as appear too "cock-sure" in his findings. Nevertheless, I do not feel justified in receding a jot from the *main* position I assumed in my first letter, or from my maintenance regarding Mr. Meredith's "involved" and "occult" literary style and diction. Yet I was scarcely prepared for the sharp rejoinder of Mr. Inkstey, who took me to task so severely for having ventured to question the genius and "clearness" of one whom he evidently regards as a Master, and as a genius of the first water. Unfortunately, however, I have mislaid *THE ACADEMY* in which your correspondent's letter appeared; and cannot, therefore, at this moment, refer with absolute certainty to the literal contents of his letter, or do more than trust to memory in my comments thereon. But, really, Mr. Inkstey was so very emphatic and insistent upon certain points, that there is slight fear of my rendering him any grave injustice on that account; while I am perfectly willing to forget altogether his more personal comments and satirical reflections upon my want of "understand-

ing" and *discernment* generally! Moreover, I labour under a distinct sense and weight of obligation to Mr. Inkstey, on account of his having at once boldly undertaken to *interpret* the "Message" of George Meredith, since it has remained to him alone, in so far as my recollection serves me, to so much as attempt an interpretation at all of his Master's *Gospel*. Hence, however much, or little, importance I may attach to his "interpretation," I cannot but admire his courage and frankness. Without more ado, then, let me repeat Mr. Inkstey's "interpretation," which, apparently, amounts to this, viz.: that George Meredith's message was a "message of hope and of courage to the young; and of burning hatred for all shams, and of everything dark and stupid!" This, in effect, if not precisely in so many words! But is such an "interpretation" correct, or at all adequate? Furthermore, even assuming it to be correct, in degree, wherein does such a Message differ, in substance, from the tenor and purpose of all really great writers? Yet, in the case of George Meredith, it seems passing strange to couple his name and memory with any distinctive *didactic* aim or purpose; for in nothing that he has ever written in prose, nor yet evinced in his public life and conduct, has he positively proclaimed, or approved, himself as one actuated by lofty human motives, or sagacious, practical, didactic purpose. To pretend, therefore, that he delivered any distinct "Message," or waged war on the "Powers of Darkness," in any true sense is manifest hallucination, or else arrant nonsense. For if ever author, or man of genius, were vague and obscure, or whimsical and erratic of diction and method, or illogical and indefinite at large, that author and man of genius was George Meredith. But to diverge and enlarge: I am well aware, as Mr. Wake Cook implies, in his letter in the same issue of *THE ACADEMY*, that "shallowness" and "clearness" do, oftentimes, go hand-in-hand, and that it remains only for the "cultured few" to quite adequately grasp and realise the more involved sentences and purport of some writers of unquestioned literary merits and of profound scholarly attainments. Nevertheless, I contend that no writer of fiction is ever justified in writing *obscurely*, or in such a manner as to confuse the common understanding—since your novelist writes for the masses, and his *vocation*, or *mission*, if of any worth at all, is to enlighten and to please. In philosophy and in theology it is otherwise, in so far as *lucidity* is essential, since the philosopher, the metaphysician, and the theologian treat of the obscure and of the mystic and their methods and resorts render it imperative that they should command an unwonted vocabulary, and deal in terms and words that are sometimes quite incomprehensible to the uninitiated.

But it is not thus with the novelist, and man of letters, generally; and one of the besetting evils of our times—the besetting sin, and parent of common mischiefs—is the tendency of novelists and "authors" of every sort to pretend to so much more "learning" than they actually have, by the employment of dark and obscure terms and methods, and by mendacious practices and resorts. Hence my protests, and my arraignment of George Meredith's "dark" and "obscure" literary style and diction. For, even though it would be absurd and unjust to class him among the *secondary* rank of authors of fiction, I regard him as one, who, because of his actual eminence in the realm of literature, has done much to stimulate and accentuate a common evil. For to pretend that he was a Master of "clear" and incisive diction, is palpable absurdity: he may have given us many "vibrations" (and vibrations may, and often do, prove salutary); but his vibrations proved, too often, only so many jarring discords and confusing sounds.

Moreover, "clearness" in an author never does, and never did, essentially imply "shallowness," any more than "muddiness" does depth! And who, in all the world of letters, was more "lucid" than Macaulay? And who less "shallow"? In effect, all men of pre-eminent genius, in literature, have been men of supreme lucidity of diction—men whose names and fame have been assured to all time by virtue of their *universal genius* and simplicity of diction.

But such is the confusion of the public mind at this moment, and so superficial and erratic the common herd of writers, that the veriest charlatans and tyros "pass" for scholars and luminaries in public estimation if only they can enact the fool-rôle of "obscurity" and "eccentricity." For it is so easy to appear profound, by piratic methods and the adoption of an "obscure" and bewildering "style"—suggestive of profound learning and deep meaning! To be sure, these comments and reflections do not apply to Mr. Meredith at all; even though he is to be properly regarded as an exceedingly obscure and involved writer. For no man of intelligence actually questions his talents and literary eminence. I simply diverge in this wise in order to modify to some extent the apparent resentment of your two correspondents, and to correct their misapprehension of my actual purport.

However, let me conclude this letter with a citation or two from the *Prelude* to "The Egoist," in order to show just how

well, or ill-, justified I was in my first comments upon Mr. Meredith's attested "obscurity." The following will, I think, suffice; for if any really sane mind can intelligibly unravel the actual meaning and purport of such passages, I am pretty confident that it will emerge from the ordeal severely strained!

Take, for example, these lines: "Who, says the notable humourist, in allusion to this Book (i.e., *The Book of Earth*, whose title is the *Book of Egoism*), who can studiously travel through sheets of leaves now capable of a stretch from the Lizard to the last few pulmonary snips and shreds of leagues dancing on their toes for cold, explorers tell us, and catching breath, by good luck, like dogs at bones about a table, on the edge of the Pole?"

"Inordinate unvaried length, sheer longinquity, staggers the heart, ages the very heart of us at a view. . . . And how, if we manage finally to print one of our pages on the crow-scap of that solitary, majestic outsider? . . . We may, with effort, get even him in the Book; yet the knowledge we want will not be more present with us than it was when the chapters bring their end over the cliff you ken of at Dover, where sits our great lord and master contemplating the seas without upon the reflex of that within!"

Again, if this be not enough to "stagger the heart"—not to say the "eminent understanding" of so appreciative a commentator and interpreter as Mr. Inkstey, the following "definition" of *Comedy* may possibly elicit additional "explanation" at his hands: "Comedy is a game played to throw reflections upon social life, and it deals with human nature in the drawing-room of civilised men and women, where we have no dust of the struggling outer world, no mire, no violent crashes, to make the correctness of the representation convincing."

Now, just how "clear," how precise, and how convincing these passages may appear, to "certain minds," I cannot say, nor a bit comprehend; but that to a full "90 per cent." of readers they will appear but so much inarticulate drivel or sheer madness, while to the remaining "10 per cent." (of, assumedly, an extremely cultured and subtle order of mentality and intuition) they may possibly appeal strangely! In effect, such "clearness" as Mr. Inkstey and other "exclusives" of his variety, and lovers and admirers of the "occult" and "involved" in literature, may profess to discover in the passages cited must needs be of a very peculiar order—a "clearness" approaching, in "peculiarity," to the flighty, meteoric flashes of divination and insight occasionally displayed by denizens of Bedlam.

Or, to put the case more mildly, shall I say that it requires the "incandescent reason" of a "Clara Middleton" to adequately decipher and "interpret" the "Message" of George Meredith?

EDWIN RIDLEY.

GEORGE MEREDITH AND HIS STYLE.

To the Editor of THE ACADEMY.

SIR,—One might safely venture the dictum that there are no lukewarm admirers of Meredith. Either one is caught up in a whirlpool of admiration for the master's style, philosophy, and amazing skill; or one regards him as a cryptic poseur without the ability or desire to express his thoughts in sane, lucid English. There seems to be no via media between fervid enthusiasm and apathy towards his art.

Meredith has made more of a reputation than a vogue. That is because reputations are established rather by the responsible critics and men of letters than by the general public upon which an author's vogue depends.

The creator of "*The Egoist*" is essentially a literary man's novelist. His penetrative flashes of reflection, his fleeting, nimble thoughts, half-hushed and evanescent, just as they sweep from his pregnant intellect like "a swallow's wing skimming the city stream," make no small demand on the wits of his readers. His prodigality of ideas bewilders us. They flood like a torrent of light—and travel as quickly. We gasp for breath at the profusion. We stifle in a volcanic stream of liquid fire. Our literary appetites have become accustomed to more niggard fare.

Unlike almost all other writers, Meredith does not mar his thoughts by giving them the conventional literary setting. His lightning genius demands a more sympathetic medium. His muse is rare and fastidious.

As the mind conceives thought before framing utterance, so Meredith sets down in printed brain the workings of his imagination. He unveils our darkest thoughts, petty or noble, with the scalpel of the literary surgeon. He is supreme as a dissector of souls. What manner of man is this, we ask, that discloses our very cerebrations with almost uncanny and preternatural clairvoyance!

His novels are not, primarily, narratives of incident, though they do not lack dramatic situations. They are human souls laid bare under the searchlight of his mighty genius.

He had learned the universal truth that there can be no effect without a cause; that volition precedes action; that motives, whether subconscious or realised, instinctive or half-realised, are the parents of deeds.

Shakespeare's rare perception of human nature gave us wonderful and exact portraits of universal types and their actions. Meredith peers behind the action and reveals the thought processes leading up to it.

Shakespeare's genius was dramatic. Meredith's genius was penetratingly philosophic. He looked right through the deeds of men. He knew them better than they knew themselves. He has pictured for us the subtlest emotions, and to accomplish this he has chosen the vague and delicate language of emotion. Shade with shade impalpably blends and interweaves upon the canvas.

From this fact has arisen the charge of wilful obscurity. Little wonder that the dilettante or sybarite in letters complains. Like all truly great writers, he reveals his magic thoughts only in return for one's deepest study. The study of Meredith is a cult. Only those who have read and re-read his works may claim company with the elect of his disciples.

Not merely did he hold up the mirror to Nature, he plucked from her the secrets of her bosom. So daringly and accurately has he done this in one of his masterpieces that no one of parts, reading the "*Egoist*," can fail to recognise in the hero phases of one's own nature.

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